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German team to Iraq to free jailed citizen

AMMAN (R) — A leading German politician left for Baghdad Sunday to try and win the freedom of German student Kai Sonderrmann jailed for illegal entry into Iraq. Official sources said Hans-Jürgen Wischniowski, 71, a prominent member of the German Socialist Party known for his close ties with Arab countries, left for Baghdad earlier in the day with Mr. Sonderrmann's mother and father.

UNRWA staff to stage sit-in

AMMAN (J.T.) — Staff committees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) will stage a 36-hour sit-in at UNRWA headquarters Monday and Tuesday, according to Odeh Rahal, spokesman for the committees. Mr. Rahal said the sit-in is in protest against UNRWA's refusal to meet staff demands for salary increases, improvement of conditions of services, including a reconsideration of the pension and annual leave schemes.

Hungarian Premier Antal dies at 61

BUDAPEST (R) — Prime Minister Jozsef Antall, leader of Hungary's first post-communist government, died in hospital Sunday after losing a long fight against cancer, government spokeswoman Judit Juhasz told Reuters. Mr. Antall, 61, was admitted to hospital three weeks ago for treatment of cancer that had spread from his lymphatic system to other internal organs. His condition had deteriorated steadily over the past few days.

Hizbollah activist killed in explosion

BAALBEK (AP) — An activist of the Hizbollah party was killed and another seriously wounded Sunday in a car-bomb explosion, police reported. They said the blast at 6 p.m. (1600 GMT) occurred in the village of Nabha, 20 kilometers northwest of the ancient city of Baalbek, a traditional Hizbollah stronghold in east Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. One victim, Fuad Ambaz, died instantaneously. His cousin, Imad Ambaz, was rushed to a Baalbek hospital that was quickly ringed by party comrades and relatives of the powerful Ambaz clan.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (left), Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (centre) and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (right), meet in Cairo Sunday (AFP photo)

Israel, PLO extend autonomy deadline

Rabin-Arafat summit fails to break deadlock; two to meet again in 10 days

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Sunday failed in a last-minute bid to meet a deadline for agreement on launching Palestinian self-rule and decided to meet again in 10 days.

Mr. Rabin said after two hours of talks with Mr. Arafat: "We decided to give ourselves a certain time to rethink and will meet again in 10 days. It may be nine or 11, here in Cairo."

The two had tried to strike a deal to meet Monday's deadline for implementation of the Sept. 13 PLO-Israel accord for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank town of Jericho and the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Rabin had in the last two weeks hinted at a delay, but Mr. Arafat had described the Monday deadline as sacred.

"I believe it is better to negotiate a better accord, Mr. Rabin said.

Negotiations on implementing autonomy would continue in Paris on the economic aspects and in El Arish, in Egypt, on the transfer of power, Mr. Rabin said.

"The major problems are

who will control ceasefire lines between the territories and Jordan and the territories and Egypt, the control of bridges and crossing points and the size of the Jericho area," Mr. Rabin told a Cairo press conference in Hebrew.

"There are the main points on which we have not reached agreement," he said.

"These are different approaches on how to solve these problems."

"We will meet again in Egypt to give a chance for informal contacts and study the outstanding questions," Mr. Rabin said.

Mr. Arafat looked despondent as he told a separate news conference that both sides were still committed to the outline peace accord, "but we have some differences over some points and we agreed to have another meeting within the next 10 days."

PLO officials, who had argued that Israel must keep to the withdrawal timetable or risk even more Palestinians turning against the peace accord, looked angry and upset after the meeting.

Mr. Arafat, looking tired and drawn, told the press conference: "We had an important meeting."

"The Israelis and the Palestinians are committed to the declaration of principles but there are some differences," the PLO chairman said.

"We agreed to meet again here in Egypt in 10 days insha'Allah," he added.

Asked if he thought 10 days was long, Mr. Arafat replied: "Ten days is not a long time."

He also voiced hope that the delay in implementing the self-rule would not lead to a new spiral of violence in the occupied territories.

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho is the first stage in a five-year interim period of self-rule for the Palestinians during which they are to negotiate a permanent peace settlement with the Jewish state.

But many people on both sides condemn the accord as a betrayal, particularly the 120,000 Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories and Palestinian hardliners who dismiss any possibility of peace with Israel.

Since the secretly-negotiated accord was made public, 38 Palestinians and 18 Israelis have been killed, several in revenge attacks by settlers and

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Gammoh presents budget to deputies

Revenues and aid to cover JD 1.487b allocations

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government Sunday presented the Lower House of Parliament with what Finance Minister Sami Gammoh described as the first "deficit-free" budget in the history of Jordan.

The general revenue, including grants and foreign aid, of JD 156 million, will completely finance the JD 1,487.1 million draft budget, Mr. Gammoh told the House in his budget speech.

The budget projects an estimated 8.7 per cent in general revenues over the reestimated revenues of 1993, with local revenues covering about 86 per cent of the total capital and current expenditures, he said.

Mr. Gammoh said the total expenditure was estimated at JD 1,487 million, reflecting an estimated increase of 11 per cent over the reestimation of 1993 expenditure.

An estimated JD 1,128.4 million constitute current expenditure, compared to the reestimated JD 1,049.3 million current expenditure of 1993, he said. He estimated capital expenditure at JD 357.7, compared to JD 292 million in reestimated expenditure in 1993.

Spending on defence and internal security was estimated at JD 378.1 million, financial management and subsidies to state institutions, basic food goods and debt servicing were estimated at JD 494.1 million and the economic development services were put at JD 249 million.

The general management sector will receive JD 160 million, the international affairs

sector JD 16.4 million, the social services and education sector JD 252.4 million and the cultural, youth, telecommunication and transportation sectors JD 81.1 million.

Domestic and foreign debt servicing was estimated at JD 300.1 million, compared with the reestimated JD 281.2 million for 1993.

About JD 66 million will be earmarked as an emergency budget to finance development and capital projects if financing was made available through grants, foreign aid or soft loans.

An estimated JD 495 million expenditure by public institutions is added to the government spending, bringing its total value to about JD 2 billion or 50 per cent of the estimated gross domestic product (GDP) for 1994.

Mr. Gammoh told the House that the government aims at achieving the following economic goals in 1994:

1. Achieving a growth of no less than 5.5 per cent in fixed prices in the GDP.
2. Reducing the general consumption in relation to the GDP from 99.3 per cent in 1993 to 97.8 per cent.
3. Lowering the deficit in the trade balance within the balance of payment as a percentage of the GDP from 10.4 per cent in 1993 to 7.2 per cent.
4. Reducing the budget deficit after excluding the grants from 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 1993 to 5.3 per cent.
5. Keeping inflation at 4.5 per cent.
6. Maintaining the stability of the currency and building the country's foreign exchange reserves.
7. Improving the balance of

payment through promoting exports, increasing the local production and encouraging export oriented industries.

8. Decreasing foreign indebtedness.

9. Improving the quality of life through effectively dealing with poverty and unemployment.

10. Charging the real cost of government services while improving its standards.

11. Keeping subsidies on basic food items and making sure that subsidies go to those who need them.

Mr. Gammoh said that the draft budget, which was based on the principles of attaining self-sufficiency and modernising economic legislation among other things, represents the government's economic plan in the third year of the economic adjustment programme.

He said the draft law was unique in that general revenues cover general expenditure, each of the Kingdom's eight governorates has independent budgets, and that it is designed to treat the problem of low productivity in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Gammoh said initial indicators point that the national economy continued to grow at a "good" level even though performance of some sectors was better in the first nine months of 1993 because they were affected by the "political events" in the last three months.

He said the GDP was expected to grow by six per cent by the end of 1993 due to the projected 12 per cent growth in the construction sector, 10 per cent growth in the agricultural sector, and seven per cent in

the trade sector.

He said, however, that a negative growth of 2.7 per cent is expected in the mining sector because of lower international prices, increased competition and decreased international consumption of phosphates and fertilisers.

Mr. Gammoh added that the "continuation of the embargo on Agaba" contributed to the negative growth of these industries because of the higher costs of transportation it led to. The mining industries contribute 12.6 per cent of the GDP with the private sector contributing only five per cent, he said, calling on the private sector to increase its contribution to productive industries.

The minister said the local consumption in relation to the GDP decreased by about three per cent, compared to 1992. "This is a very positive indicator," he said.

Pointing that the volume of trade was stable in comparison with 1993, Mr. Gammoh said that a positive change in the kind of goods exchanged had occurred. The ratio of consumption goods imported in 1993 dropped to 38 per cent from 41 per cent in 1992.

The balance of services is expected to achieve a surplus of \$1.6 billion in 1993, registering an increase of 10.5 per cent over 1992, said Mr. Gammoh.

He attributed the increase to the improvement in the performance of the tourism sector and increased remittances from Jordanian expatriates. He said the increase is expected to bring the deficit in the current account down to 10 per cent from 15 per cent in 1992.

(Continued on page 5)

Arafat under Palestinian pressure to sign economic accord with Jordan

Jordan may have to adopt self-protective measures

By Lami K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

PALESTINE Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat's failure to sign a draft economic agreement with Jordan during his short visit to Amman last week is triggering serious political crisis that could undermine Jordan-PLO coordination and relations.

In press statements, Jordanian officials have implied that if Mr. Arafat refuses to sign Jordan might have to take unilateral steps to protect itself.

Jordan's main concern is that the PLO would seek an agreement with Israel that could deal a serious blow to the Jordanian dinar and threaten the Kingdom's financial stability.

PLO officials contacted in Tunis said that they hope that the Jordanian government would be patient with the PLO, especially since Mr. Arafat was expected to come under greater internal pressure to reach agreement with Jordan, following his meeting Sunday with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The recent crisis between Jordan and the PLO has given rise to fears within the PLO and among Jordanians that the lack of coordination between the two sides would only make all Arab parties

involved, individually, more vulnerable to Israeli terms as each will be compelled to accommodate the Jewish state to protect its own interests.

Many PLO officials are disgruntled by Mr. Arafat's evasive attitude, especially that they believe the projected agreement with Jordan is crucial for disengaging the economy of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip from that of Israel.

But Mr. Arafat himself, according to PLO officials, is convinced that it is premature to sign the agreement in the belief that it could restrict his margin of manoeuvrability as his main priority is to attain international, Arab and Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationhood.

Mr. Arafat is said to have explained to PLO Executive Committee members prior to his arrival in Amman last week that he needed to first improve his position vis-a-vis Israel and the Western donors before signing the agreement with Jordan.

But the draft agreement, under which the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) will regulate monetary policies in the future Palestinian entity that will adopt Jordanian currency, has not been discussed in detail or ratified by the PLO Executive Committee. The PLO leader has been

seeking an Israeli approval of a Palestinian central bank and an independent Palestinian currency to ensure Palestinian sovereignty.

In fact Mr. Arafat claims, according to PLO officials, that Ahmad Qouriea was not authorised to reach agreement with Jordan in the first place.

The Executive Committee, the officials say, was also not aware of Mr. Qouriea's mission last September but that was mainly due to the declining role of that top-level body as Mr. Arafat consolidated his one-man approach.

In November Mr. Arafat sent the head of the PLO Economic Department, Mohammad Zuhdi Al Nashashibi, to modify the basic principles reached between Mr. Qouriea and minister of state for Prime Ministry affairs, Jawad Al Anani. The mission of Mr. Nashashibi was viewed as a tactic by Mr. Arafat to procrastinate until his position with Israel was clarified.

Following his return to Tunis, Mr. Nashashibi gave an interview to Jordanian evening daily, Akher Khabar, in which he also disclosed the details of what was termed as the final draft agreement emphasising the need to give priority to Jordan over Israel.

Mr. Arafat's hesitation has

provoked internal resentments within the PLO. Many officials argue that some kind of an arrangement should be worked out with Jordan before reaching further agreement with Israel.

Judging by interviews conducted by the Jordan Times, there seem to be three trends within the PLO regarding the issues:

- The first, represented mainly by Mr. Arafat, holds that there should be procrastination over the agreement pending better terms with Israel, which would pave the way for Palestinian sovereignty.
- The second trend calls for an immediate signing of the agreement lest the Palestinian economy become even more vulnerable to Israel's.
- The third supports an agreement with Jordan but argues that a clear political framework, at least between the two leaderships, should be worked out first.

The third trend seen to include most of the PLO Executive Committee members and Mr. Arafat's leading partners in the peace process. Mr. Arafat's attitude has provoked serious criticism by his colleagues for ignoring the importance of Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

(Continued on page 5)

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Qatar wants balanced relations with Iraq

DUBAI (R) — Qatar said a visit to Baghdad by its deputy chief of staff was a private one but stressed its need for what he called balanced ties with Iraq.

Qatar's Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassim Ben Jabr Al Thani told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in an interview that the Baghdad visit was not part of "Qatar's dealings with Iraq."

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein met the Qatari officer, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Fahd Ben Mohammad Al Thani, earlier this month and Iraqi newspapers said he was on an official visit.

Sheikh Hamad told the BBC in the interview broadcast on Saturday, "That visit was not an official one... and the meeting was upon an initiative by the Iraqi president," the Qatar News Agency reported.

But the minister stressed that although his country fought against Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war and fully abides by United Nations-imposed sanctions on Iraq, Doha favoured "balanced and clear ties" with Baghdad.

We said Doha believes that Baghdad's ties with the countries which fought against it in the war should be restored to their earlier levels once Iraq met all Gulf war-related U.N. resolutions.

But Arabs diplomats say Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, mainly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are against any contacts with Iraq as long as President Saddam remains in power.

Sheikh Hamad also said regional border disputes should be resolved through dialogue or international arbitration.

Qatar almost boycotted last year's annual GCC summit to protest a border clash with Saudi Arabia last September but attended at the last minute when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepped in to mediate between the two neighbours.



Israeli right-wing demonstrators burn posters from the "Peace Now" movement as well as one of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin with Yasser Arafat during an anti-peace accord demonstration (AFP photo)

Israeli army morale drops as withdrawal approaches

By Dan Perry
The Associated Press

TEL AVIV — With the approach of military withdrawal, Israeli soldiers in the occupied Gaza Strip see their duty as both pointless and more dangerous.

"We really feel like cannon fodder this time," said Itzik Zaigari, a 31-year-old paratrooper reservist, after ending a month-long tour at the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip.

It was his unit's fifth stint in the occupied territories since the Palestinian uprising began in 1987 and third in Jabalya, the teeming refugee camp that is home to some of the most hardcore underground leaders.

Hanan Gilad, another member of the unit, said the impending withdrawal has sapped the motivation of soldiers to maintain control.

In the early days of the uprising soldiers worried about losing the test of wills if they failed to break up protests in Jabalya, Gilad said.

"But now, we know there is no significance to what we are doing... except for sticking to some timetable and holding on to the camp for another month or two," he said. "No one wants to be the last one hurt here."

Army regulars, who need

special permission to speak to reporters, have received instructions in recent weeks to avoid interviews, army sources said. But comments by reservists, who can speak freely after returning to civilian life, indicated a widespread morale problem in Gaza.

According to the Sept. 13 peace accord with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Israel is to begin withdrawing on Monday from Gaza, where 800,000 Palestinians live, and from Jericho in the West Bank.

Security arrangements are incomplete, however, and both sides have hinted at a delay.

The uncertainty, combined with opposition to the accord by hardliners, has made the last weeks volatile.

Danny Ben-Tal, a 37-year-old journalist, said one of the strongest feelings among soldiers is that, just as camp patrols are becoming pointless, they become the most dangerous. The principal weapons used to be stones, but now militants have automatic weapons.

"This was the first time in the intifada we were constantly facing live ammunition," he said. "You're scared for your life, man."

Ben-Tal said a firebomb

missed him by two metres. He said he saw a soldier shot in the thigh and his company commander hospitalised with head injuries after being stoned while chasing several armed men.

Frustration is worst among regular soldiers aged 18 to 21, who are "dying to react" but have strict orders intended to prevent a cycle of violence, he said.

Noam Hadar, 32 and just back from a month in Gaza, said morale is "at its lowest ever."

Reuven Gal, director of the independent Israel Centre for Military Studies, said research indicates soldiers may have serious emotional scars.

Gal, a former chief army psychologist, said many soldiers emerged from wars "with more appreciation for life and they discovered their ability to stand up to difficult situations," but that the intifada left soldiers "burned out and desperate."

Early fears that participation in violence in the territories would make young Israelis more violent at home did not materialise, Gal said.

Instead, he added, exposure to the complex, explosive situation in the occupied lands appeared to have a moderating effect.

Rabin-Arafat deadlock

(Continued from page 1)

Hamas.

The PLO, though, suffers more than the Israeli government from the delay. Palestinians are deeply cynical after more than a quarter-century of military occupation and the PLO leadership is dissolving as even the most loyal officials criticise Mr. Arafat for autocracy and mismanagement.

Mr. Arafat came to Sunday's summit without the man who was until recently his most important aide — Mahmoud Abbas, who ensured a place on radical assassination lists by signing the outline peace accord with Israel.

As in their second meeting in Cairo on Oct. 6, Mr. Rabin refused a public handshake with Mr. Arafat when the two sat down with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the presidential palace in northern Cairo.

"Later, later," Mr. Rabin told reporters.

Mr. Arafat, wearing military fatigues and his trademark checkered headscarf, was smiling before starting tete-a-tete talks with Mr. Rabin, who was dressed in a dark suit and appeared stony faced.

Palestinians in the occupied territories were angry and bitter that the PLO-Israel accord failed its first test, and some predicted that missing the promised start-up date would

fuel more bloodshed.

"The people will be very angry tomorrow. We are disappointed," said Abdul Karim Sidr, head of Mr. Arafat's Fatah office in Jericho who said he was still hopeful of other gestures like prisoner releases to ease tensions.

Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi, a leading figure in the Gaza Strip, also slated for autonomy, said the failure was a blow to the credibility of the peace process.

"The delay will not help for the credibility of peace," he said. "People will have more fears and doubts. My feeling is that this agreement will have brought us nothing because it doesn't tackle the key issue of settlements."

There are about 3,500 to 5,000 settlers estimated to live in the Gaza Strip, but they require Israel's army to remain in some locations and complicate agreement on security issues. Palestinians want to see all the soldiers leave.

"The 10 days that they talked about will not be enough. It will be postponed again because the problems are too big to be solved in 10 days," said Sami Abu Samhan-dane, one of the new generation of Fatah leaders in Gaza.

He said he did not believe there would be an outpouring of anger, but youths might confront Israeli soldiers to put

pressure on the Israeli government.

Hanna Amireh, a leader in the pro-Arafat Palestine People's Party, said unrest could increase as a result of the breakdown in Cairo.

"There are less and less people who would support the agreement, and of course, violence will rise up," he said.

In the latest attack, an Israeli bus driver was seriously wounded in the West Bank on Sunday night by Palestinian in a passing car.

The man was hit by a bullet in the chest in the latest of a series of tit-for-tat shootings in the Hebron area, where Palestinians have been under curfew since last Sunday when Muslim fundamentalists shot dead two Israelis.

Two Palestinians fired bursts of automatic fire at the bus from a car before driving off. On Friday Jewish settlers killed three Palestinians in Tarmiyah village just north of Hebron.

A caller said Sunday a group calling itself "the Sword of David" was responsible for killing the three Palestinian workers, and vowed to carry out more such attacks.

The claim from the previously unknown group came Sunday in a call to form news agency in Tel Aviv. The caller said the group would "wipe out the police command" if it stood in its way.

"We are aware of the call," said Police spokesman Uzi Sandori, declining further comment.

Police Minister Moshe Shab-al said there were no signs of an organised Jewish terror group in the occupied lands.

Yossi Sarid, the environment minister, said Sunday that there were signs a terror group was in the making. "If there is no underground, there is preparation for one," he told reporters. "This preparation is dangerous."

Elias Freij, mayor of the West Bank town of Bethlehem, said the postponement of the first deadline of the peace accord was a dangerous precedent that cast doubt on other deadlines.

"Now they will have more doubts in their hearts about the true intentions of the Israeli government," said Mr. Freij. "I'm sure it will have a psychological effect on the Palestinians."

He called on Israel to make immediate gestures to rebuild confidence, including releasing some of the 10,500 prisoners. Reports suggested Israel planned to release 1,200 soon and allow some deported leaders to return.

"People here had been waiting with all their hearts to see their own police in the streets," said Akram Abu Sunbul, 28, a resident of the Akbar Jabr refugee camp.

Libyan lobbying in U.S. said under investigation

WASHINGTON (R) — The Justice Department is focusing a criminal investigation on alleged Libyan attempts to lobby the U.S. government to ease sanctions, U.S. News and World Report said Saturday.

The probe centres on allegations that Libya made large illegal payments to U.S. citizens in return for lobbying at the highest levels of the U.S. government, the magazine said.

A Justice Department spokesman said the agency would have no comment on the report.

According to the magazine, the goal of the lobbying campaign was to ease international sanctions against Tripoli and help resolve the case of two Libyans indicted for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Among the allegations being investigated were a claim by a Libyan official that Tripoli contributed to then-President George Bush's 1992 reelection campaign, an act which — if true — would violate U.S. election law, the magazine said.

The government is also looking into possible talks between American businessmen and Libyan officials on a plan for Libya to invest \$200 million in U.S. real estate — a transaction investigators believe Libya pursued in an effort to bypass United Nations and U.S. sanctions, the news magazine reported.

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, facing a tightening of U.N. sanctions over Libya's refusal to hand over the two suspects in the airliner bombing, has asked Italy to help end

the row, a Catholic magazine said.

Italy — Libya's former colonial ruler — could help "persuade Britain and the U.S. that a lot could be obtained from Libya through friendship and not sanctions," Colonel Qadhafi's said in "30 days" magazine.

The United States said Friday that it would press for an embargo against oil exports from Libya if it persisted in refusing to surrender the two men that U.S. and British investigators believe were responsible for the bombing.

Interviewed in the magazine by former Italian Premier Giulio Andreotti, Col. Qadhafi said that Egypt had put forward a proposal aimed at ending the dispute, which Tripoli considered acceptable. He did not elaborate on the proposal.

"But I don't know if the accused and their families will accept it," he said.

Asked if he would agree to the suspects being tried in Egypt, Col. Qadhafi said: "Egypt has nothing against it, nor have we."

Libya's failure to hand over the suspects and comply with U.N. orders to help a French probe into the 1989 bombing of a flight over Niger that killed 171 has led to tightening of sanctions.

The new curbs, which went into force on Dec. 1, freeze Libya's assets abroad and bar it from importing certain types of equipment used at oil transport terminals and in refineries, but they do not cover the export of Libyan oil or Libya's purchase of oil-drilling equipment.

France allocates \$4.65m to protect nationals in Algeria

PARIS (Agencies) — The French government proposes to increase its foreign affairs budget by 27.48 million francs (\$4.65 million) to reinforce security measures for French nationals living in Algeria.

Finance Minister Nicolas Sarkozy put forward the proposal at a meeting of the upper house, the senate, to set the 1994 budget. It is aimed at "financing the exceptional measures for reinforcing the security of the French living in Algeria."

Three French consular workers were kidnapped in Algeria in October by a militant fundamentalist group and subsequently released. But they carried a warning that all foreigners should leave the country by Dec. 1.

Eleven foreigners have been killed since September, four of them since the Dec. 1 expiration of the deadline set by militants for expatriates to quit the country or face death.

The senate, in a first reading early Sunday, later adopted the budget, carrying a deficit of 301.4 billion francs (\$51.9 billion), or 4.1 per cent of gross domestic product.

Group claims murders

An Algerian Islamic Group has said it killed four foreigners in Algeria this month and vowed to keep hunting "the enemies of God," the French daily Le Monde said Saturday.

Le Monde said it had received a statement, said to be from the Islamic Armed Group, claiming responsibility for the murders of a Spaniard, a Russian woman, a retired Frenchman and a British computer technician.

"Attacks will go on... we will continue hunting the enemies of God," Le Monde quoted the statement as saying.

The four have been killed since the expiry of the deadline from the Islamic Armed Group

warning foreigners to leave Algeria or face death.

The killings convinced the foreign community they are in danger in Algeria and prompted the U.S. and German embassies to cut staff.

Paris has said it is withdrawing non-essential staff and bolstering security around French public buildings in Algeria, such as schools and consular offices.

It warned French residents "to exercise extreme vigilance."

Other countries, including the Netherlands, Britain and Belgium, have warned their citizens not to travel to Algeria.

More than 1,700 Algerians have died in the violence, blamed by the authorities on Muslim militants, that has gripped the country since an election the fundamentalists were poised to win was cancelled in January 1992.

Two Muslim fundamentalists shot dead a prison warden on Saturday and an Algerian court prosecutor, attacked 13 days ago, died of his wounds, Algeria Radio said.

Hocine Ben Ali was killed in front of the prison at Boufarik, 25 kilometres south of the capital.

The radio said that Saïda court prosecutor Abdul Rahman Chekaf died on Saturday from bullet wounds, inflicted in an attack last month by a lone gunman as he parked his car.

Chefak, 44, was the seventh court official to be killed since last May 15.

The official news agency APS said on Saturday that Mohammed Benhamouda, brother of the leader of Algeria's main Islamic union, had died during Thursday night in a Paris hospital.

He was seriously wounded last month when unidentified men attacked him at his business in the east Algerian city of Constantine.

NEWS IN BRIEF

9 killed in Tajik-Afghan border clashes

DUSHANBE (AFP) — Nine Tajik militants were killed in clashes with border guards, it was reported Saturday, as a regional chief said some 200,000 people living in the Gorn-Badakhshan area close to Afghanistan faced starvation. The agency ITAR-TASS, quoting the Tajik Foreign Ministry, said the nine were killed as they attempted to sneak back into Tajikistan across the border with Afghanistan at Pyandzh. The militants were among a group of 15 who tried to cross the border from Afghanistan, the ministry said. Nine were killed and the others fled back across the frontier. There were no casualties among Tajik troops. Garibov Chabozov, chief administrator of Gorn-Badakhshan, said Saturday that 200,000 people faced famine because violent clashes and a harsh winter were blocking access to the region. Two children had already died from hunger in villages in the mountainous region, where the situation was now "very critical," he said. Bread was not rationed to 300 grammes a day for each person and there were only ten days of flour reserves left, he said. Clashes between Afghanistan-based groups and Tajik troops have worsened the situation. Thousands of Tajik rebels fled the country for Afghanistan after a neo-communist government came to power in elections in December 1992.

Iran: No military ties with N. Korea

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Defence Minister Mohammad Foruzandeh said Saturday on returning from a visit to Pyongyang that Iran did not plan to expand its military cooperation with North Korea. Cited by the official IRNA news agency, the minister said the two countries would cooperate in the areas of communications, industry, housing and urban development, and trade. Foruzandeh, who attended the fifth Tehran-Pyongyang joint economic commission meeting, said Iran and North Korea had signed a protocol on trade and services. But he denied Western media reports on the expansion of military cooperation between Iran and North Korea, including a contract for testing North Korean missiles in Iran. "No such programme has ever existed between the two countries," he stressed. North Korea, which sold arms to Iran during its eight-year war with Iraq from 1980 to 1988, in recent years bolstered its ties with the Islamic republic and the two countries regularly exchange official delegations.

Celebrated filmmaker Bagdadi dies

BEIRUT (AFP) — Celebrated French-Lebanese film maker Maroun Baedadi died here on Friday aged 43, officials said on Saturday. Bagdadi, regarded as one of the most outstanding Lebanese film directors, was in Beirut to work on a new film, "Zawayia" (nooks and crannies). Relatives said his body was found in his parents' home in Ashrafieh early Saturday. He had fallen down the stairs. Bagdadi left a wife, son and young daughter. His wife is due to have another baby in the next few days. Born into a Lebanese television production, "Seven-and-a-half," which proved a great success. Just before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in April 1975 Bagdadi made "Beirut, Oh Beirut," a documentary regarded by critics as a forerunner of the tragedy to come. Bagdadi later made three full-length feature films in French. During his stay in France he became a French citizen, but returned frequently to Lebanon, making four documentaries on the civil war. Bagdadi, who spent a year in the United States working with film director Francis Ford Coppola, was planning to make a film in the United States early next year.

Militants urge foreigners to quit Cairo festival

CAIRO (AFP) — An Islamic militant group called on all foreigners participating in an international film festival here on Saturday to leave the country and claimed responsibility for attacks on two cinemas. A statement released by the outlawed Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah said one of its units "carried out a successful attack with bombs and automatic weapons" on two cinemas showing films on the programme of the "pornographic" Cairo festival. "Fundamentalist gunmen riding in cars sprayed moviegoers with automatic gunfire and smoke bombs after midnight Thursday, killing a policeman and wounding six other people. The festival, which started on Nov. 29, ended late Saturday. The group called on "guests of the festival to return to their countries," stressing that it could "not remain silent about such reprehensible acts." Police said on Friday they had captured two suspects, including a member of the Al Jihad organisation, whom they shot and wounded as they tried to arrest him in old Cairo. He was in custody in a Cairo hospital. Police found sketches of the cinemas on him and details of how many policemen would be on duty outside, news reports said.

Indonesia to curb rise in number of pilgrims

JAKARTA (AFP) — The government of Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic nation, is to curb the number of Muslims taking the yearly Hajj to Mecca to 150,000, officials news agency Antara said here Sunday. "The number of pilgrims has been increasing by 20 per cent each year and 150,000 have been projected for the 1994 pilgrimage, which is only two months away." Antara quoted Religious Affairs Minister Tarmizi Taher as saying, Mr. Taher said the limitation was aimed at promoting Hajj management and services to Muslims. Under an agreement reached between Saudi Arabia as host country and countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the latter were only permitted to send a maximum of one per thousand of their population to join the annual pilgrimage season. About 125,000 Indonesian Muslims, or 0.88 per cent of the country's 185 million population, made the trip in 1993.

Kuwait foresees agreement with China

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait expects to conclude a defence cooperation agreement with China, Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah Al Ahmad was quoted on Sunday as saying. "Our next agreement will be with China," he was quoted as saying by the London-based Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper, the official Kuwait News Agency reported. Kuwait last month signed a defence pact with Russia, its fourth with a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 77111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Les Aventuriers de L'Espece
18:00	La Soirée Dimension
18:30	Maggy
19:00	News in French
19:15	The weekly sports magazine
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Delta
21:10	The House of Elton
22:00	News in English
22:30	"The Gully"
23:10	The Sleeping Beauty
PRAYER TIMES	
04:59	Fajr
06:21	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:29	Dhuhr
14:14	'Asr
16:37	Maghreb
17:59	'Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Smeifich, Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632765	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 645990	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637400	
De la Salle Church Tel. 647571	
Terrence Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
St. Ann International Church Tel. 625226	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 641955	
The Latter-day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bulleted supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
Clouds will build up gradually during the day, rain will fall in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, temperatures will drop gradually, and winds will be southeasterly becoming southwesterly active, in Aqaba, it will be dusty, winds will be northerly active and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	

Amman	6 / 15	Alquds pharmacy	(—)	Water Authority	680100	Princess Haya Hospital	(02)27555
Aqaba	12 / 24	ZARQA:		Jordan Electricity Authority	835615	Great Jordan Hospital	(02)27555
Deserts	4 / 16	Dr. Akram Haddad	965550	Electric Power		Ibn Al Nafes Hospital	(02)24702
Jordan Valley	13 / 23	Khalifeh pharmacy	985417	Company	634381	AQA:RA	
				RJ Flight Information	08-53200	Princess Haya Hospital	(03)31411
				Queen Alia Int. Airport	08-53200		
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18, Aqaba 26 Humidity readings: Amman 29 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.							
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS							
NIGHT DUTY							
AMMAN:							
Dr. Ramzi Mzawi	794744						
Dr. Khalil Al Jbali	740740						
Dr. Muhammad Ounam	612332						
Dr. Salah Al Usud	649028						
First pharmacy	661912						
Firdous pharmacy	778336						
Al Aseena pharmacy	637035						
Natrouh pharmacy	626712						
Al Salam pharmacy	636730						
Yacoub pharmacy	644945						
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660						
Natrouh pharmacy	626712						
Najib pharmacy	647632						
IRBID:							
Dr. Mohammad Al Khalil	277157						
EMERGENCIES							
Food Control Centre		637111		HOSPITALS			
Civil Defence Department		661111		AMMAN:			
Civil Defence Immediate				Hussain Medical Centre			
Rescue		630341		813813/32			
Civil Defence Emergency		199		Khalid Maternity, J. Amn.			
Rescue Police		192, 621111, 637777		642816			
Fire Brigade		891228		Akheh Maternity, J. Amn.			
Blood Bank		775121		642412			
Highway Police		843402		Jabal Amman Maternity			
Traffic Police		896390		642612			
Public Security Department		630721		Malhas, J. Amman			
Hotel Complaints		605800		636140			
Price Complaints		661176		Palestine, Shmeisani			
Water and Sewerage				664171/4			
Complaints		897467		Shmeisani Hospital			
Amman Municipality				609131			
Complaints		787111		University Hospital			
Telephone Information				845845			
(directory assistance)		121		677229			
Overseas Calls		010230		The Islamic, Abdali			
Central Amman Telephone				661271/7			
Repairs		623101		Al-Ahli, Abdali			
Abdab Telephone Repairs		661101		777101/3			
Jordan Television		773111		Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh			
Radio Jordan		774111		775111/26			
				Army, Marka			
				891611/15			
				Queen Alia Hospital			
				602240/50			
				Amal Hospital			
				674155			
				ZARQA:			
				Zarqa Govt. Hospital			
				(09)98333			
				Zarqa National Hospital			
				(09)900560			
				Ibn Sina Hospital			
				(09)986732			
				Al Hikma Modern Hospital			
				(09)94909			
				IRBID:			

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) in connection with the flight information service provided by the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:10	.....	Sana'a (R)
08:35	.....	Damascus (R)
09:00	.....	Jeddah (R)
09:30	.....	Riyadh (R)
09:55	.....	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (R)
10:00	.....	New Delhi (R)
10:10	.....	Beirut (R)
10:45	.....	New York, Amsterdam (R)
17:00	.....	Cairo (R)
18:45	.....	Bangkok (R)
19:30	.....	Casablanca, Tunis (R)

RIEF
ashes

International team of democracy advocates see room for strengthening Jordan's efforts

By Subair Obeidat
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians have much to be proud of in their efforts towards democracy, but there remains room for further strengthening of the process, according to an international team of democracy advocates which recently conducted a visit to Jordan and the West Bank.

"Everyone (we met) seemed to believe that further progress towards democracy is important for securing peace and an equitable economic development," said Thomas Melia, director of the Middle East Programme at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

NDI is a non-profit corporation that conducts non-partisan international programmes to help maintain and strengthen democratic institutions and includes among its ranks experts from the United States and from other countries.

According to Mr. Melia,

NDI works on an inclusive, multi-party basis to exchange information about political party development, electoral processes and democratic governance.

"We are not arriving at judgements, we do this work out of curiosity and the meetings (in Amman) were conducted in a frank and relaxed manner," Mr. Melia told the Jordan Times.

NDI maintains that its multinational approach reinforces the message that there exists no single ideal democratic system, although certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

"Although Jordan is unique and must find its own way to build democratic institutions, there are nevertheless some similarities with other countries," Mr. Melia said.

He added that "there does seem to be interest among Jordanians in learning about the transitions to democracy that are underway in other parts of the world."

Mr. Melia described the team's first visit to Jordan as a "survey mission to see the unfolding political situation among the Palestinians in the occupied territories and learn more about the democratisation process initiated by His Majesty (King Hussein) and introduce the institute to Jordanians."

During their five-day visit, the team met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Interior Minister Salameh Hammad and Lower House Speaker Taher Al Masri.

"We also met with political activists such as Abdul Hadi Majali (Al-Ahd Party), Yacoub Zayadeen (Jordanian Communist Party), Anis Muasher (Al-Wa's Party) and Isma'el Farhan (Islamic Action Front), as well as people from outside political parties," he said.

Among possible areas of cooperation that were discussed are initiatives to strengthen the operation of Parliament, amending the Election Law

and reforming and enhancing women's participation in politics, according to Mr. Melia.

On their future projects, Mr. Melia said that there are no specific plans yet and that NDI's next step depends on the kind of requests they receive from the Jordanians.

The team, which left Amman Sunday, will return to the region within a few months, upon a request from Palestinians in the West Bank "to supply them with information about the development of elections," Mr. Melia said.

Other than the Middle East, NDI is actively involved in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the former Soviet Union.

Its programmes include political party training, election processes, legislative training, local government, building civil-military relations and civic education. NDI issues various publications in addition to a quarterly review of its activities.

Jordan pursues environment strategy

AMMAN (Petra) — The government is currently setting up a specialised department to implement and monitor the Kingdom's National Strategy on the Environment endorsed last year, said Minister of Planning Ziad Fariz Sunday.

Addressing the opening session of a U.N.-sponsored meeting at the Forte Grand Hotel in Amman, the minister said the national strategy, which was drafted in cooperation with international organisations, provides for the protection of the environment against industrial pollution and suggests guidelines for safe exploitation of natural resources.

The creation of the department, said Dr. Fariz, was part of the country's drive to create qualified cadres and prepare executive programmes in order to implement the environmental strategy.

The information gathered so far about the environment is insufficient for the work of the department, said the minister, adding that there is a need for a comprehensive national data base.

Underlining the importance of international expertise in helping the country adopt environmental protection pro-

grammes, Dr. Fariz stressed that research and development should essentially come from within the country.

Organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and financed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the two-day meeting is attended by 32 senior Jordanian officials and experts from the Department of the Environment as well as 11 representatives from ESCWA and UNEP.

ESCWA officials said that the Jordanian team attending

the meeting is directly responsible for the implementation of economic projects in the Kingdom.

Also addressing the opening session of the meeting, entitled "Strengthening of Management and Planning Capabilities in Jordan," was Sahab Bakjaji, ESCWA executive secretary, who explained the objectives of the seminar and its benefits to Jordan.

The industrial revolution and the exploitation of natural resources worldwide, including Jordan, have brought about major changes to the environment, said Dr. Bakjaji.

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Human rights goals should coincide with development, say activists

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The struggle for human rights should proceed in step with development rather than follow it, human rights advocates say.

"We are very well aware of the history of some developing countries that confiscated the freedoms of their peoples in the name of development," said Ali Oumleil, secretary-general of the Arab Thought Forum, in a cultural festival held Saturday evening at Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation to mark the 45th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "But (time revealed) that development was not achieved and human rights remained absent."

Dr. Oumleil pointed out that the respect for human rights in the West throughout its development process was one of the basic reasons for the West's prosperity, and that increased expansion was met with increased freedoms.

The theory that calls for a disengagement between development and democracy is unacceptable to us," Dr. Oumleil said. "The ideology that rejects the right to a democratic state is an antonym to development and an antonym to development is a fundamental right of the individual."

Dr. Oumleil also rejected the Orientalist theory that maintains that divine rights in Islam cancel human rights. He said that safeguarding God's rights is safeguarding human rights too.

"Those who choose to found their human rights thinking on natural rights should not oppose those who prefer to resort to God's rights as a base," he said, but added that both advocates should, at the end, meet at one point.

Speaking of human rights in accordance with international charters and covenants, Lower House Deputy Tawajj Faisal said the most important right of the individual is freedom of expression, which is the origin of all freedoms and the key to development in any society.

"We will not be able to protect any right or struggle for any freedom if we have no freedom of expression," Ms. Faisal said.

The right to choose one's beliefs, the freedom to leave the country, and access to information were all cited by Ms. Faisal as being parts of and stemming from the freedom of expression ... and freedom of expression, she continued, is suppressed by ideological intimidation that is exercised not only by some regimes but also by social forces, especially religious movements that intimidate

people in the name of religion.

Such power has a political dimension, she maintained, and religion is used to suppress free thinking, she said.

An individual's right to have access to information is controlled by political authorities, said Deputy Faisal, and therefore he/she is again subjected to limitations on a his/her freedom of expression.

According to Ms. Faisal, the regimes that oppose the creation of organisations aim mainly at political groupings rather than charitable societies, which consequently means that they aim to suppress freedom of expression.

Secretary-General of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights — Jordan Branch Amin Shuqair spoke of the need to protect women's rights and said that the election of the first woman deputy to the Lower House of Parliament is "an honourable start."

He said he hoped that women in the Jordanian society will be guaranteed full rights, will enjoy equality and escape the injustices they have been suffered for many decades.

"I hope this start will be a sign of a better future where the practice of viewing women as inferior will disappear once and for all," said Dr. Shuqair.

He said he hoped that the declared commitment of the Jordanian government to human rights principles will be the beginning of a progressive and clearer stage in enhancing human rights and introducing related legislation. "I hope that the government will introduce the necessary laws and legislation that would protect the rights of the individual under all circumstances," Dr. Shuqair said.

He called for the appointment of a committee to study the laws and regulations that contradict the spirit and letter of the international laws on human rights and amend them to ensure that every individual enjoys full rights.

He also called on Arab governments to adopt an Arab charter for human rights that would ensure the basic rights of the individual and provide adequate assurances to their people to practise these rights.

Dr. Shuqair added that ensuring these rights can be carried out by establishing an Arab committee as well as an Arab court for human rights.

The Arab governments should also endorse the international agreements on human rights to put "an end to phenomena of violating human rights and should be urged to license human rights organisations," he said.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent confers medal on Sheikh Ben Jazi

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday conferred Jordan's Independence Medal upon Sheikh Faisal Ben Jazi in appreciation of his efforts as a member of the Lower House and his dedicated services.

Princess Sarvath receives Japanese volunteers

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Sunday received a team of volunteers from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The group has just completed their voluntary mission in Jordan. The team members trained students at the Young Women's Muslim Association (YWMA) in such trades as ceramics, weaving and physical education.

JETT puts 14 new buses into service

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mohammad Adwan Sunday lauded the important role played by the Jordan Express Travel and Tourism company (JETT) in promoting tourism in Jordan. Addressing a special ceremony held at Hussein Youth City to celebrate the introduction of 14 new tourist buses to the JETT line, Dr. Adwan said that since its creation in 1973, JETT has contributed to developing the economic industry and supporting the national economy. Dr. Adwan praised the efforts of JETT staff saying that they have contributed positively to meeting the increasing demand for tourist transport. Chairman of the Board of Directors of the company Adnan Al-Mufri said that adding 14 new buses to the company's fleet will enhance its ability to meet increasing demands. He said the new buses are equipped with a computer system designed to ensure comfort. With the new buses, the number of JETT tourist buses total 150. The ceremony was attended by Transport Minister Aqel Halasa, Director general of the Antiquities Department Safwan Al Tel and senior government officials.

Transport minister meets with Sudanese, Syrian officials

AMMAN (Petra) — Transport Minister Aqel Halasa Sunday reviewed with Director General of the Sudanese Ports Corporation Muhammad Taher scopes of bilateral cooperation. Both officials stressed the importance of exchange of expertise and field visits as means to enhance this cooperation. Mr. Halasa said the ministry is ready to sign a marine transport agreement with Sudan, adding that the agreement will serve the economies of both countries. Mr. Taher said he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ports Corporation to organise cooperation between the two corporations in the areas of training, field visits and providing passenger services. Also Sunday Mr. Halasa reviewed with Syrian Deputy Transport Minister Ahmad Bashir Shahin bilateral relations in the transport field.

U.S. congressional team arrives for talks today

AMMAN (Petra) — A five-member U.S. congressional delegation, headed by Senator Dennis Deconcini arrives here today (Monday) on a two-day visit for talks with senior officials on the latest developments in the region, the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations.

Qatari education official to arrive

AMMAN (Petra) — Qatari Minister of Education Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al Turki Saturday arrives here on a three-day visit for talks with his Jordanian counterpart on bilateral cooperation in education. Mr. Turki and Minister of Education and Higher Education Khaled Al Omari will sign an agreement on educational cooperation. Mr. Turki's visit comes in response to an invitation extended to him by Dr. Omari.

Produce exports hit 25,800 tonnes

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan last month exported 25,800 tonnes of vegetables and fruits worth JD 6 million mainly to Arab countries, according to a statistical bulletin issued by the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Sunday. November's agricultural exports to Saudi Arabia topped the list at 2.4 per cent followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at 3.9 per cent, Bahrain at 20.5 per cent, Qatar at 10.3 per cent and Lebanon 4 per cent, according to the bulletin. Exports to foreign countries accounted for 0.9 per cent of total exports, the bulletin added. Tomatoes made up the major portion of the produce exports which included mandarin oranges, lemons, lettuce, peppers, eggplants, cabbage, cauliflower and grape fruit. According to the AMO, November's exports registered an increase by 1,623 tonnes over October.

Police arrest man for murder of wife

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Police Sunday said they have arrested a man in connection with the murder of a woman janitor at a school in Amman. According to police, the man has admitted to committing the crime. Brigadier Abdullah Al Hababeh, the department director, said that the murdered woman, an Egyptian national identified only as R.A.A., was found dead in the courtyard of the school, located on the Italian Hospital Street hours after the crime was reported to the police. The department's Criminal Investigation Unit questioned the woman's husband among other people. The man was interrogated several times and confessed to murder his wife, said Brig. Hababeh. He said the husband, whose name was withheld, confessed that he had followed his wife to the school where she started searching for the school funds and other items, so steal. According to Brig. Hababeh, the husband said that when his wife tried to stop him, he stabbed her several times and left her dead in the schoolyard.

Labour offices call for more inspection teams

AMMAN (Petra) — Heads of labour offices in the various governorates Sunday recommended that the Ministry of Labour increase the number of teams inspecting establishments for the legal employment of foreign workers.

At a meeting chaired by Minister of Labour Khaled Ghazawi, the officials also stressed the need to intensify inspectors' visits to the various institutions to ensure that they abide by the regulations concerning the employment of guest workers.

The heads of the departments discussed coordination between the labour ministry, the Social Security Corporation (SSC), the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) and the National Population Commission in building an integrated data base to monitor the process of employment. Meanwhile, a team representing the Central Council of the Federation of Jordanian Labour Unions returned Sunday from Damascus after attending a meeting of the Arab Federation of Labourers.

Fawzi Doso, the council's chairman, who led the team to the Damascus meeting, said issues related to Arab workers' employment in other countries, social and economic matters pertaining to Arab workers, labour activities and labour union programmes were tackled at the meeting.

He said solidarity among Arab labourers and preparation for a pan-Arab federation of labour unions in Tunis next month were discussed. Mr. Doso said he was received by Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zou'bi, with whom he discussed several labour-related issues and cooperation between Syria and Jordan in labour affairs.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artists Khaled Hijazi, Mohammad Al Ameri, and Adnan Al Sharrif at Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Samia Zarou at the Open Studio "Al Marsam Al Maftuh," Jabal Amman, 2nd Circle (9:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00 all days except Fridays).
- ★ Exhibition of handicrafts at the Marriott Hotel.
- ★ Photographic exhibition by artist Basheir Al-Hajeh at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition on the infatada and Jerusalem at the Professional Association Complex.
- ★ Two exhibitions of paintings by Edelbert De La Portilla and Piotr Pawluczok at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of prints and drawings by Fakhr El Nissa Zeid at Darat Al Funn of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Al Leveid. Also showing the permanent exhibition (Saturday-Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.).
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by a number of Iraqi artists at La Casa Art Gallery (between the

5th and 6th Circles).

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by artist Khalid Khreis at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of watercolours by artist Shaher Jirni at the Goethe Institute.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Farhadi Abdel Haliez at the Balka' Art Gallery in Al Fuhels (10:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 720902).

CHRISTMAS CAROLS


- ★ Christmas carols presentation at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILMS

- ★ Short film entitled "Impromptu" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- ★ Film entitled "Tous Les Matins Du Monde" at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Circassian film entitled "The Twilight of Hopes" at Philadelphia Cinema at 8:30 p.m.

LECTURES

- ★ Lecture entitled "Earliest Humans in the Jordan Rift Valley" by Dr. Phillip Edwards of La Trobe University in Australia, and Dr. Phillip Macomber of the Ministry of Water Resources in Oman at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 7:00 p.m.



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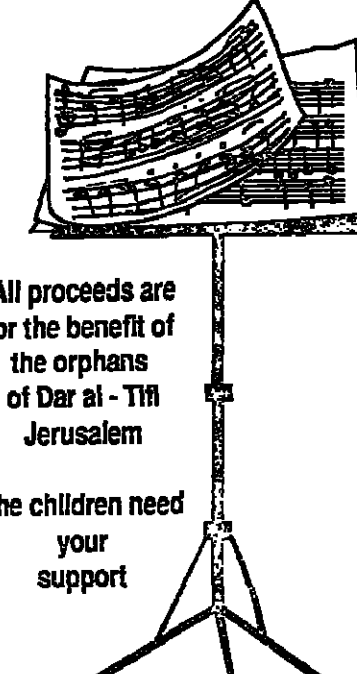
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ARR. NEW YORK	15:10	15:10	SUN. 15:10

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The future of democracy in Palestine

By Dr. Hisham Sharabi

The following is the keynote address delivered by Dr. Sharabi at the 26th annual convention of Arab American University Graduates on Oct. 22, 1993.

LAST month I visited Palestine for the first time in 46 years. I left Palestine before the fall, shortly after graduating from AUB (the American University of Beirut) in 1946 to pursue my studies at the University of Chicago. I went to see my home in the Ajlun quarter, but I did not try to go in. My Jaffa was not the Jaffa I now saw; this was a surrealistic remnant of the city I knew. Nothing has changed and everything has changed. The truth I already knew was forcefully reconfirmed: memory can preserve itself only by keeping the present at bay.

The memory I wanted to preserve is of the Jaffa which some of you may know: of a gay, vibrant, bright, city, getting rapidly prosperous after the end of the Second World War on its world-famous oranges. Jaffa represented then the confident mood that prevailed throughout Palestine. Palestinian society was at that time a highly literate society, developing slowly into the kind of secular, modernising society the pioneers of the Arab Renaissance of the previous generations had envisioned for the entire Arab World.

My sad return to Jaffa made me experience the full tragedy that befell my hometown and the entirety of my country. It was as though an atom bomb had been dropped on Jaffa and obliterated it. Like Hiroshima it was rebuilt. But unlike the now prosperous Japanese city, Jaffa never came back to life. Instead, another city, populated by another people, was created. The original inhabitants have simply disappeared; the few who remained or took refuge in it from the surrounding villages led a shadowy life in the ruined outskirts; reminders of the city no longer there.

The life that was interrupted nearly fifty years ago in Jaffa and in all of Palestine, can now be rebuilt. In this sense Palestine is still within reach. Travelling in Gaza and throughout the West Bank I felt the firm soil of Palestine under my feet and the warm Palestinian sun on my face. I had been told by friends who had visited the occupied territories that Jewish settlements were to be seen everywhere, on hill tops, along the main roads, close to wherever there was a Palestinian village or town. While this was certainly true of certain areas, particularly around Jerusalem and along the Ramallah-Nablus road, most of the settlements I saw appeared isolated and thinly populated, vulnerable enclaves rather than expanding outposts of a powerful settlement project. In contrast the Arab towns and villages strewn across the countryside looked calm and serene, firmly rooted in and confidently blending with the landscape.

This was not the overcrowded space I had envisioned. It seemed capable of sustaining a much larger population than it now had, especially if traditional agricultural gives way to more modern techniques and high-tech industry replaced the old methods of manufacture. The problem should no longer be expressed in the old economic framework but in terms of the political and economic decisions the new society will take in re-fashioning itself and its future.

I don't think there is much point in spending much time discussing the Oslo agreement and its various shortcomings. Most of those who support it and those who oppose it have much the same fears and reservations about it. Where they disagree is over what to do about it now that it has been negotiated, signed and ratified.

I think we all agree that a far better agreement could have been negotiated. But even a better and more acceptable agreement would still have essentially the same framework, the one based on the National Palestine Council's 1988 resolution accepting the two-state solution and recognising Israel's right to exist and one governing the peace process launched in Madrid in 1989. The difference between this agreement and a better one would have been in detail but not in basic structure.

The fact is we have been pushed into the water. But if we don't swim we will drown.

What's the point in harping on what most of us do not disagree with? Is there a realistic alternative to the course of action provided by this agreement, which has been enthusiastically endorsed by the international community and accepted, albeit reluctantly and with many reservations, by the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza according to recent polls.

Rejection of the agreement may appear to some the proof of ideological purity, to others it may be psychologically the most satisfying decision to take. But it is a Quixotic position at best, and could be regarded as callous when the majority of the Palestinians who have carried the burden of the struggle over all these years have chosen to take the risk of the fait accompli. It is clear that Palestinian rejection this time will cause the world to turn its back to us and forget there is a Palestinian problem, leaving us and the Israelis to settle our differences alone.

Probably the only logical, though in my opinion suicidal, alternative is the one put forward by the fundamentalists: all or nothing. And this is an alternative which the majority has also rejected.

The question should not be whether the PLO should enter negotiations on the basis of the agreement but whether the PLO, given its history of corruption and ineptness, can handle such a huge task, and what should be done to steer it or push it in the right direction.

We talk today about human rights, basic freedoms, democracy. What do these concepts mean to the Palestinian people who over the last half century have been uprooted and dispersed, and their society crushed? These concepts certainly mean to them a great deal more than they do to people who already enjoy security and a stable social order. Having to start from scratch, the Palestinians want to build a free, humane and democratic Palestine. They will not be satisfied, for example with just the slogans, but will want truly free elections in which no one will be elected by 99 per cent of the vote. They also want to do what no Arab regime has been able to achieve since independence: not only to award women full rights and equality but also to honour Palestinian women, by acknowledging their unique and heroic role in the intifada and the struggle for national survival. What happened in Algeria will not be allowed to happen in Palestine. What happened in Algeria shall not be allowed to happen in Palestine.

As they rebuild society the Palestinians also have to build their state. No free society in the modern age can endure without state sovereignty. The West Bank and Gaza will remain just a geographic expression and the Palestinian people only "inhabitants" or "residents" or refugees until the state of Palestine is established. One glance at what is happening in the Balkans, in the former Soviet Union, and in many other parts of the world, will convince us of how crucial a statehood is for the survival of small peoples.

For the Palestinians, especially crucial is building a state firmly based on the rule of law. This is of the utmost importance, for the alternative can only be another version of patriarchal authority, for which democracy and human rights are merely manipulative slogans; in short, just another mukhabarat state.

Unfortunately, the way things are going does not inspire much optimism. Two examples: Reporting from Amman earlier this month (October), Middle East International correspondent Lami Andoni describes how what she calls the "chaotic" working practices of the PLO were affecting its effectiveness in dealing with the post-agreement situation on the ground.

"The leadership's delay in forming committees to discuss details of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and the responsibilities of the elected council have had more to do with the chaotic working practices and lack of preparedness that characterise the PLO. Furthermore, the leadership seems to be deliberately delaying the process. It hopes thereby both to secure a bigger role in administering the funds for the occupied territories and to ensure victory in the elections."

And, she adds, "Many fear that (the leadership) might simply move the degenerating

PLO institutions to the territories lock, stock and barrel, without either new blood or organisational reform.

Youssef Ibrahim, the correspondent of the New York Times reporting from Tunis last week, described the same situation this way:

"Senior (Palestinian) officials spoke of their concern that the leadership... was moving too slowly in putting the right people in charge. There is also some criticism of (the) tendency, in the words of a senior executive, to 'favour trust over competence,' by placing loyalists in important positions and ignoring talented but outspoken Palestinians who may question (the leadership's) absolute authority."

And, he adds, "The competition for posts in the coming Palestinian administration in Jericho has hampered the PLO's ability to communicate with the outside world as rivals are consumed in settling accounts with one another."

What is to be done? More specifically, what can we do here in the United States?

First of all we must remember that what the Palestinian-American and Arab-American community says and does carries much more weight in Palestine and the Arab World than most of us think. The following thoughts may be useful to consider.

If most of us, particularly the intellectuals, professionals, business people, students and academics continue to restrict their comments and criticisms to private discussions and social gatherings, while maintaining in public neutral or non-committal, or at best, mildly reproachful attitudes, we should have no one but ourselves to blame for not being taken seriously. In these critical times, only by stepping up and taking a clear position can we make our voice heard and make those in charge take us seriously.

The only way Palestinians, inside and outside of Palestine, can fight for democracy is by engaging in democratic practices: in exercising the freedom of speech and criticism without fear, in holding public meetings, in setting up teach-ins, in organising panel discussions, when it becomes necessary, in taking to the street and demonstrating.

Only open criticism and debate can generate the kind of consensus that would yield political results. Political pressure is possible only when criticism is translated into specific demands.

In the West Bank and Gaza I learned of different informal groups forming, within the various organisations, among independents, in the women's movement. In this country, the same could happen in the Palestinian-American and Arab-American communities. Groups and individuals forging demands on specific issues and making substantive appeals directly or through the media can influence events and shape decision-making.

In concluding, I would like to underscore two issues I have indirectly alluded to: the woman question and Islamic fundamentalism.

Without confronting these two problems openly and directly Arab society, including Palestinian society, will not be able to carry out the radical social change to enable it to deal with the modern world and to enter the 21st century.

The evasiveness and hypocrisy with which even progressive and secular males have treated the woman question can only bring shame on Arab manhood. The essential precondition of liberating the Arab male himself, is by the politicisation of the woman question, that is, by making it a central issue in the struggle for building a new society in Palestine and in the Arab World as a whole.

As for the Muslim fundamentalists, we refuse to deal with them as enemies. They are not enemies but patriots who have laid down their lives for the liberation of Palestine. The way to deal with militant Islam is certainly not through repressive confrontation, as some Arab regimes have chosen to do, but through dialogue and mutual accommodation. The Palestinians will never accept to be an instrument in the West's war against Islam.

This is why progressive and secular Palestinians should insist on the centrality of these two questions. For on their proper solution will depend not only the kind of society that will be rebuilt in Palestine, but the future and role of Arab and Muslim civilisation in the world.

The challenge of peace

By Dr. James Zogby

THE three months that have elapsed since the signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles have been filled with tragedy and genuine threats to peace.

The euphoria that accompanied the signing in both Israeli and Palestinian society has subsided, not only among the often cited "enemies of peace" but now even the average "men in the street" are questioning whether peace is, in fact, near at hand.

The spiral of violence is increasing and at times appears to be out of control, and is exacting a toll in human life and from the morale of Palestinians and Israelis. The result has been a shift back to "old thinking," and every day there are more who oppose peace and find reinforcements who share their hatreds.

Statements made by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders show continuing and strong support for the peace process and the accommodation that such a process will require. But events on the ground are weakening the leaders' ability to make the trade-offs needed to implement the accord.

Had the past three months been uneventful, both leaderships would have had the time and political room required to negotiate and make difficult choices. But the rising death toll has reduced the breathing space provided by the September 13 accords to the point where both leaderships have become boxed-in by constituents who are by degrees angry, concerned and disheartened.

In this context, more dangerous than the actual killers are the more mainstream leaders of Hamas and the Palestinian left opposition, and the Israeli Likud and religious right wing. Although they distance themselves from the acts of violence, they actively play off the fear these events bring out in both communities.

This is textbook terrorism at work. Fringe groups use violence to create fear and provoke repression, and then reap the "harvest" of repression by claiming that the established order won't work. What is novel about this situation is the unholy alliance between Israeli and Palestinian extremists who are essentially working together to thwart the peace process.

Further complicating the situation is the reaction of the Israeli military, which has played into the hands of the "enemies of peace." Excessive shootings and killings, the continued practice of hunting down and killing "suspects," and the gratuitous brutality of daily life under occupation have contributed to a serious erosion of support for the peace process in the Palestinian community.

So, too, the virtual silence of the Palestinian leadership (with one exception) in the face of repeated killings of Jewish settlers has brought many Israelis to wonder how secure their lives would be living next to Palestinian-ruled territory.

While the words of both leaderships demonstrate a shared commitment to a negotiated settlement, the cycle of violence requires that they do more. To this point, they seem incapable of doing any more.

The psychological breakthroughs of the September 13 signing was not accompanied by a political breakthrough. The accords themselves were left deliberately vague, ambiguous, and in a few cases, contradictory. It was hoped that the political capital earned from the signing would provide both the strength and incentive to resolve the difficulties — but, as I have noted, the passing of time, the violence and the reactions of both societies to it have eaten away at the capital earned on September 13.

Consequently, both leaderships now find themselves in a position not unlike the one in which they found themselves at the conclusion of the ninth round of the Madrid talks. There is a desperate need for a breakthrough, but both sides are too weak to make any further movements. As before, such a situation may require an outside agent to help them do what they are unable to do on a strictly bilateral basis. In this setting, the U.S. should play a more active role and become the "real partner" that Secretary of State Warren Christopher regularly uses when he describes this country's role.

Oslo happened because the U.S. could not or would not provide the independent leadership needed to help both parties move forward. After Oslo, the September 13 signing and the last three months of

violence, a new and more volatile reality has emerged; but the stakes are higher now because so many people's hopes have been raised on both sides of the Green Line. At this crucial moment U.S. leadership and action, which has been lacking during much of the post-Madrid period, is very much needed.

The U.S. should not negotiate for the parties, but it should provide "good offices" and gap-bridging proposals to help the parties break deadlocks. It must also provide consistently strong reinforcement to both leaderships. And the U.S. ought to provide a balanced vision of peace attractive enough to assist both leaderships to win back the public support they need to make accommodations (and hence an agreement) possible.

In the matter of negotiations it is difficult for a concerned public to tell the forest from the trees. Technical issues bog down not only the negotiators but also obscure from public view the desired outcome. It is, therefore, imperative that an outside friend of the process to continue to hold out the picture of where peace will lead.

For Israelis to feel the sense of security which will enable them to withdraw from the territories, they must be reminded that leaving the territories is not a favour or a concession but a necessity. Rabin recently articulated this idea in a major address, but it must be reinforced by repetition many times over. Israelis must realise that there is more security in peace than in continued occupation, and more prosperity and security within a comprehensive peace (including trade, travel, cultural exchanges, etc.) than in holding Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian real estate.

Similarly, Palestinians must be assured that the occupation will end and they will be free to shape their lives and determine their own destiny. The good offices of the U.S. should provide the Palestinians a portrait of their future as an independent people.

Clearly, good offices and portrait painting can only do so much, and a third-party "full partner" can only do so much. There is a compelling need for concrete progress, however small it may seem, to help both sides prove that peace is not only possible but, when achieved, will bring positive

changes in people's daily lives.

The quicker the movement towards withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian police force, and the more rapid the improvement of daily life in the territories, the more rapid will be the decrease in violence. Palestinians will acquire a vested interest in stability, and will view terrorist acts as provocations that can only bring about a return of Israeli force.

Palestinians must be willing, as some Palestinian leaders already have, to assure Israelis that Palestinian police will provide security to all within their jurisdiction, and that they will crack down on violence. This is not anti-intifada. It is prov-intifada in the truest sense of building the infrastructure of Palestinian society towards Palestinian independence from Israeli rule.

With assurances and a renewed sense of confidence and public support, Israel must move to stop the settlers because their violence not only kills Palestinians and impedes Israeli withdrawal (which is their intention), but it also blocks Israeli efforts to achieve recognition and end its regional isolation. Settler violence, then, helps perpetuate Israel as a garrison state at war with its neighbours.

At the same time Palestinian violence, far from ending the occupation and bringing closer the day of a Palestinian state, slows the Israeli withdrawal and brings on increased Israeli repression.

Extremists on both sides must be held accountable not for merely challenging their leadership and impeding this particular set of negotiations but more significantly, for locking their respective societies into a maelstrom of conflict and fear. The cycle can be slowed and eventually stopped.

The danger is that these three months of violence and repression have produced new scars on the psyches of both peoples that will make it more difficult to move forward. There still is no going back, but the new reality may not be as promising as once generally believed. The sooner the process gets moving again, the fewer obstacles there will be to overcome. All parties to the Madrid process, including the U.S., must work earnestly to fulfill their obligations to peace.

LETTERS

The limits of freedom

To the Editor:

When meeting last week with the British author Salman Rushdie, U.S. President Bill Clinton seems to have been amateurishly induced to expose the loftiness of his office to the barbs of journalistic brinkmanship.

No one can question the sacrosanctity of the freedom of speech. Yet, Salman Rushdie, with his book "The Satanic Verses," had to be held accountable for abusing his "freedom." Hence the farwa by the late Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini which came as a result of Salman Rushdie's refusal to retract.

In one of Mr. Clinton's pronouncements during Mr. Rushdie's visit to the White House, the president dithered the late Ayatollah Khomeini with a farwa of his own to wit:

"I do think it's important that here in the United States we reaffirm our commitment to protect the physical well-being and the right to speak of those with whom we may intensely disagree..."

Now hapless, Salman Rushdie is found caught between two potent fatwas!!

Certainly, the president never intended any disrespect "to the people who have that religious faith," meaning Islam. However, allowing for the dust of media flimpany to settle down, it is clear that both Mr. Clinton and the late Ayatollah, each in his own way, do uphold the sanctity of freedom of speech, but evidently differ on the intended message or meaning of freedom of speech and their methods and nuances of application.

Whence, in Iran Salman Rushdie was held accountable for blaspheming Islam; here, in the United States, any Salman Rushdie, who chooses to blaspheme any religion, when pleading the First Amendment is not even held answerable.

What we are facing here is a text-book illustration of a cultural clash, which should have been avoided instead of escalated into an international hullabaloo.

For a Muslim to question the script of the Holy Koran is tantamount to blasphemy. No Muslim, ever, could permit him/herself to question the intrinsic deification of Jesus Christ and the celestial veneration of St. Mary's immaculate conception. By comparison, many Christian denominations remain lukewarm to the textual authority of the Holy Bible.

Here lies the challenge of how to reconcile the morality of secularism with the infallibility of religious dogma.

In the case of Salman Rushdie, in particular, the challenges lie in comparing the impotent sensationalism of the words of a novelist with the potent and evangelical words of God's messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, or of any Christian or Jewish prophet for that matter!!

Allow me to conclude that President Clinton never needed to champion the cause of Mr. Rushdie in order to add luster to the qualities of the First Amendment. With deference to all the president's successful achievements so far, this one of Salman Rushdie is a faux pas.

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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Gammoh presents draft budget for 1994

(Continued from page 1)

Investment volume remained at the same level of 1992, with initial indicators pointing that it would reach 30 per cent of the GDP due to the high investment level achieved in that year when returns from the Gulf brought new capital to the market.

The amount of industrial capital registered at the Ministry of Industry in November was JD 122 million, compared to JD 47 million in the same month in 1992.

Mr. Gammoh said the inflation was expected not to exceed 4.5 per cent by the end of the year. This rate and the salary increases that civil servants received in the year contributed to the improvement of the quality of life of limited and low income people.

Mr. Gammoh said the number of the work force is expected to reach 984,000, with 857,000 of them employed, thus keeping at 13 per cent the level of unemployment. This, the minister said, compares with the 18 per cent unemployment rate in 1991 when 763,000 of the 919,000-strong workforce were employed.

Mr. Gammoh said that a study conducted by the Department of General Statistics points that people living under the poverty line went down from 21.3 per cent in 1991 to 16.2 per cent in 1992, adding that the level was expected to decline further.

Mr. Gammoh outlined a government programme aimed at fighting poverty and unemployment through maintaining economic growth, activating the Employment and Development Fund, adopting a programme for employment rehabilitation and controlling the foreign labour market among other steps.

Mr. Gammoh said the government's monetary policy maintained currency stability, and led to an 18 per cent in private credits in the

first eight months of the year. He said the government would maintain its policy of lifting all restrictions on currency transfers in the Jordanian dinar and linking its value to a basket of foreign currencies. He pointed out that the floating the interest rates contributed to financial and monetary stability in the country.

The minister said that the country's foreign currency reserves slightly declined in September because the country bought back \$325 million of foreign debts and paid \$673 million in debt servicing and repayment.

He said the volume of trade at the Amman Financial Market was expected to reach JD 1 billion, compared to JD 887 million in 1992, an increase of 12.7 per cent. He said the increase was expected even though the "wait-and-see" stand of the financial sector due to the latest political developments caused a recession in the last four months.

The minister said the performance of the general finance continued to improve as a result of the country's adherence to the social and economic adjustment programme. This performance could result in achieving a surplus of JD 26.3 million if grants are included, compared to a deficit of JD 48 million that was projected in the 1993 budget.

The deficit, excluding grants and foreign aid, went down to JD 116 million from a projected JD 203 million, a decrease of 43 per cent, said the minister.

Mr. Gammoh said the adherence to the economic adjustment programme, prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), helped reschedule foreign debts from commercial and government sources. This softened the impact of foreign indebtedness on Jordan and maintained the creditworthiness of the country, he said.

The government last June reached an agreement with the advisory committee of the London Club of commercial debtors to reschedule \$895 million of foreign debts, the minister told deputies.

This agreement was signed in London Friday, he said. The deal resulted in lowering 60 per cent of the size of these debts which constitute 12 per cent of the total foreign debts of the country. The annual burden of servicing these debts was also lowered by 50 per cent, he said.

The government reduced by \$80 million the size of bilateral foreign debts by buying them back at 36 per cent of the par-value. An agreement was also reached on rescheduling \$387 million of Jordanian bilateral debts due in 1993, he said.

The minister said contracted but outstanding foreign debts will be by the end of the year decrease by about \$653 million, or 8.7 per cent of what they were in 1992. The balance of the drafted but unpaid debts is expected to decline by \$616 million or 9.3 per cent of what it was in 1992.

He said a total of \$673 million or 18 per cent of the total value of exports of goods and services was made in debt payment or servicing. The value of the drafted and unpaid debts is expected to reach 117 per cent of the GDP, compared to 142 per cent in 1992, he said. The minister said the amount of domestic debts was expected to

reach \$1.1 billion.

Mr. Gammoh said the budget made a fair balance between taxes and expenditure, reminding deputies that they have to increase taxes if they wanted more government spending.

Pointing to the global economic decline, Mr. Gammoh said Jordan had defined its economic policy in light of the regional political changes which would have a large impact on its economy.

He said the government would seek to attain complementarity among Arab states and participate effectively in drawing the economic map of the region.

He said Jordan would seek full coordination concerning the Arab boycott of Israel once the peace process produces tangible and clear results, emphasising the government's intention to maintain economic and political coordination with the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian self-rule authorities in order to plan the future relationship in a way which guarantees the national interests of the two sides.

After the House referred the draft budget to its Finance Committee, Deputy Bassam Haddadin demanded that the government makes available to deputies the letter of intent it had sent to the IMF. Speaker Taher Al Masri asked the Finance Committee to pursue the issue with the government.

In its session Sunday, the House entrusted Mr. Masri with reaching an acceptable formula about television transmission of deputies' speeches with the minister of information.

The decision was made after Deputy Abdul Karim Al Dugmi asked that Jordan Television be banned from covering the sessions of the House because, he said, it doctors the deputies' speeches in a way that misrepresents them.

Deputy Mohammad Daoudiyeh demanded that Jordan Television be "freed from the domination of the ministry of information." He said JTV, which does not present points of view opposed to the government, is a national institution which should be made independent.

"The television is the television of the government," said Deputy Ahmad Al Kasasbeh, joining other deputies in criticising JTV's government-controlled policy.

While Deputy Nader Tuheirat said television should continue to cover the activities of the House because it shows the Jordanian democracy to neighbouring countries. Other deputies said democracy should be "shown to our people before it is exported to others."

"This is a complaint, the treatment of which does not lie in banning television from the House," said Mr. Masri, adding he would discuss the issue with the minister of information in order to reach an "acceptable formula that meets with the satisfaction of all."

At the request of Deputy Mohammad Al Zibeen, acting Prime Minister Ma'n Abu Nowar said he would Wednesday present the House with a summary of the talks the government held last week with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

The House agreed to hold its regular sessions on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday mornings.

Arafat under pressure to sign accord

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Arafat's supporters counter that the PLO leader is aware of the significance of the relationship with Jordan but wants to make sure that Arab states first acknowledge Palestinian sovereignty in any agreement signed.

"If Arab countries do not deal with the emerging entity as a nucleus for a state how should we expect Israel to acknowledge our nationhood?" asked one well-placed official who supports Mr. Arafat's position.

But most PLO officials disagree with Mr. Arafat's basic argument.

"If he is worried about any agreement encroaching on Palestinian sovereignty, why does he not at least start discussing the basis of the relationship at the PLO Executive Committee level and with the Jordanian leadership?" said one senior PLO official.

PLO officials point out that the higher Jordanian-PLO committee, which is supposed to follow up on coordination, has been reduced to a mere non-functional body.

Mr. Arafat seems to believe that delaying any kind of a binding agreement with Jordan would boost his position to strike a better bargain with Israel.

But in practice, some PLO officials believe, the absence of coordination with Jordan will undermine the Palestinian position as Israel would try to dictate and consolidate its control over the Palestinian economy.

Mr. Arafat is said to have been alarmed by the Jordanian-Israeli memo signed in Washington last month that allows Jordanian banks to open or reopen branches in the occupied territories.

Some Jordanian analysts say that the Israeli-Palestinian accord, signed on Sept. 13 in Washington, has left no choice for Jordan but to reach arrangements with the PLO and Israel, separately, to protect itself.

Mr. Arafat's major argument has been that any agreement signed should be part of the long-term goal of establishing a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation between two independent states.

So far the declared Jordanian position that the future shape of the relationship could only be determined once the Palestinians in the West Bank become free to make their own choice.

The difference on whether or not the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship could be determined before the Israeli occupation ends is perhaps the major issue behind the lack of a clear and joint vision towards the future.

Palestinian critics of Mr. Arafat now argue that the PLO chairman has made it more difficult for himself to insist on a Jordanian-Palestinian relationship based on mutual recognition of two independent states after he signed an agreement with Israel that could jeopardise Palestinian sovereignty and impose on Jordan a framework for economic cooperation with Israel even prior to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Arafat is also said to be annoyed by Israeli claims that Jordan opposed Palestinian control over the bridges. According to PLO officials, what Israel has told the PLO was that the control over the bridges was a matter that mainly concerned Jordan and Israel.

What is clear, though, is that Jordan would want guarantees that it will have a say over who crosses its territories and cannot be excluded from arrangements to regulate travel. One possible proposal that some in the PLO are expected to ask Mr. Arafat to adopt is to sign a security agreement with Jordan regarding the bridges and entry and exit of Palestinians who will cross Jordanian territory.

Human Rights File

By Waleed Sadi

Giving legitimacy, respect to life

ONE OF the most contested human rights issues is the so-called "illegitimate" children subject. Throughout history, children born out of wedlock were stigmatised as fruits of evil relationships and therefore regarded as some kind of disgraceful creatures. This attitude, however, has begun to change due to the rise of a more humanistic outlook.

Even prior to advent and enforcement of the Convention on the Right of the Child, other international human rights instruments shed light on the unjust differences between children born in wedlock and those born out of it. More and more countries began amending their laws to recognise the rights of those children.

A more enlightened approach to those children began to gather momentum since they were recognised as a vulnerable group who deserve protection rather than victimisation. To buttress this contemporary line of thinking, advocates of a more human treatment of such children based their views on both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Right of the Child (ICRC).

Article 24 of the ICCPR reads as follows: "Every child shall have, without any discrimination...the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor." The emphasis here is made on the word "every" which has been repeatedly interpreted as intended to eliminate any distinction between children whether born to married couples or not.

Article 2 of the ICCPR dispels any scepticism by stipulating that "each state party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all INDIVIDUALS within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognised in the present Covenant, without DISTINCTION OF ANY KIND."

This reinforcement of the principle of equality between persons has been also resorted to by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to press for the repudiation of any differential treatment of children on the basis of their status as born in marriage or out of it.

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child proclaimed by the U.N. General Assembly in 1959 is even clearer on the requirement for equal treatment between children. The third preambular paragraph sets the tone for the Declaration by stating that children need special safeguards including appropriate legal protection before, as well as after, their birth. Principle 1 of the Declaration elucidates even further this requirement for equal treatment by stating that "every child, WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION WHATSOEVER shall be entitled to these rights (rights set forth in the Declaration). In principle 2, it is also stated that "in the enactment of laws (on children), the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration."

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which codified the principles enshrined in the Declaration, gave legal import to the guidelines for equal protection to all children. By defining a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years," the Convention, which went into effect in 1990, made it legally binding for all the state parties to treat all children equally irrespective of their status on birth.

These two basic human rights treaties reveal that no distinction whatsoever was intended by the drafters between children whether so-called legitimate or illegitimate. On the basis of this, more and more countries are removing all lingering differential treatment between children irrespective of whether or not they are "legitimate" or "illegitimate" on the grounds that children are always legitimate.

Western countries are spearheading the efforts to eliminate all elements of discrimination against "illegitimate" children. During last autumn's session of the Human Rights Committee held in Geneva, Japan was subjected to close cross examination by the 18-member tribunal on this particular issue. The occasion was the examination of Japan's third periodic report and for this purpose Japan sent a high-level delegation to

United Nations' European Headquarters. Hundreds of Japanese non-governmental organisations (NGOs) attended the deliberations of the Committee and many of them lobbied effectively by equal treatment to children and pressed the members to raise the continuing discrimination against "illegitimate" children as far as inheritance is concerned. Tokyo has already legislated out all other forms of discrimination but kept the one on inheritance. The overwhelming majority of the human rights experts sitting on the bench of the committee made pointed references to this issue and called for its speedy rectification. And in its concluding judgement, the tribunal officially called on Japan to take effective legislative measures to remove the remaining discriminatory laws on "illegitimate" children.

Now it has become almost a tradition for the committee to raise this issue. The confrontation that looms in the horizon will surely be between the Committee and traditional societies that still perpetuate the discriminatory practices against "illegitimate" children.

In legal terms, all countries must abide by the rulings of the Committee on this controversial subject except for those which made specific reservations. As a matter of fact, very few countries entered reservations on this point when they ratified the relevant international conventions. The pressure that will continue to be applied against traditional countries of the world on this matter will undoubtedly promote within them in due course a more human perspective on "illegitimate" children with a view to according them equal treatment on most dimensions of life if not all.

Here in Jordan we have perhaps one of the most progressive legislations on the equal treatment between children. In the relevant family law, there is an explicit stipulation that when the biological father recognises a child born out of wedlock as his, that child acquires the family name of the father and inherits him on equal terms with the other so-called "legitimate children". This equal treatment of all children is still the aspiration and yearning of all human rights activists in other countries that have yet to reach this level of equality. Of course there is still a great deal more than needs to be done locally to advance the cause of children in the Kingdom. The social stigma against the so-called "illegitimate children" in our country still hangs heavily over the heads of such children and needs to be addressed and rectified in keeping with our true traditions and religious mores.



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EC summit endorses tough new tack on unemployment

BRUSSELS (AFP) — For all their squabbling and rhetoric, European Community leaders ended their two-day summit here Saturday putting their stamp on a tough new tack to fight a worsening unemployment crisis.

While a dispute over financing for a massive investment project dominated the headlines, the government chiefs were quietly approving plans for economic rigour, labour market deregulation and wage restraint.

Behind all this was their belief that unemployment was now clearly a structural problem, requiring hard measures to boost industry competitiveness, and not merely a product of economic cycles.

Prime Minister John Major told reporters that such an approach would have been unthinkable three years ago. EC chief executive Jacques Delors said the 36-year-old Community had made a "new start."

Mr. Delors, the first to sound the alarm on the growing complexity of the unemployment problem, called on business and union leaders to join in the fight, although the benefits may not be immediately apparent.

"If in two or three years they can perceive a positive result, then the process of European construction will have regained part of the credibility it had lost," the Frenchman told a news conference.

The summit wound up adopting an "action plan" based on Mr. Delors' proposals to provide jobs for many of the Community's 17 million unemployed — 11 per cent of the workforce — by the end of the century.

Among them were steps to keep salaries down as a spur to job-creating investments, to reduce social charges for companies, inject more flexibility on the labour market and provide more training and education opportunities.

The leaders also backed a 120 billion ECU (\$135 billion) investment scheme to build rail, road, energy and telecommunications networks — even if Britain and other states balked at bond issues to finance 40 per cent.

On a broader level, the summit was aimed at recapturing for the jobs campaign the same energy and sense of purpose that infused the EC when it

launched its plans for a single market in 1986.

The leaders were quick to put themselves on the back, with French President Francois Mitterrand proclaiming that "a strong and valuable signal" had been sent about the Community's new seriousness.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said "we have taken an important step for recovery in Europe," but Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, who chaired the summit as current EC president, added a note of caution.

Mr. Dehaene said words had to be translated into action, adding: "It is not policies that create jobs. We can only provide a framework, a dynamism."

The summit was the EC's first top-level gathering since it transformed itself into the European union on Nov. 1, and it flexed its muscles by taking a new hard-line stance on GATT world trade talks.

Just four days before the deadline for negotiations, the EC leaders insisted their firm and television industries be given "exceptional and separate treatment" in their battle against Hollywood.

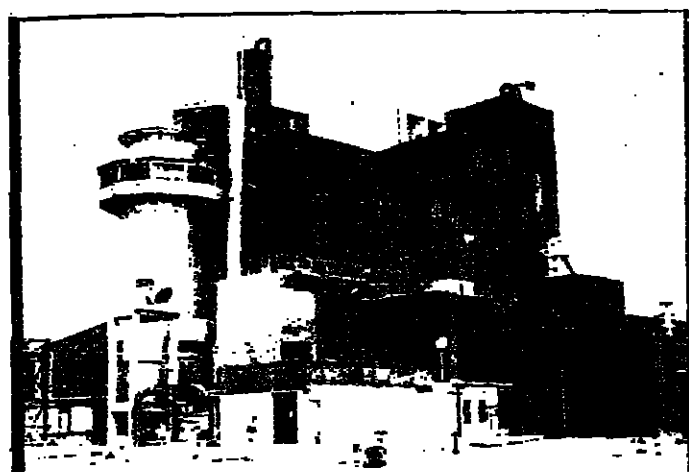
In implementation of Royal directives to develop governorates Industries, capitalised at JD 10 million, to be nucleus of Mafrag industrial city

AMMAN — In implementation of Royal directives to develop various governorates, and in line with the government's policy of encouraging industrial schemes outside the capital, the Mafrag governorate has recently witnessed the establishment of an industrial city which aims at contributing to the country's socio-economic development in general and the Mafrag region in particular.

The new industries in the Mafrag governorate were the United Company for Sulphochemicals and the United Company for manufacturing detergents which were established with a JD 10 million capital. These industries will complement the Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Company (ACI) (AI In-21) which was inaugurated by His Majesty King Hussein on June 4, 1963.

Mr. Mohammad Abdul Rahman Abu Hassan, chairman of the board of ACI which set up the industrial city in the Mafrag governorate, said that the project was bound to contribute to the overall development of the Kingdom and to help create a new industrial attraction in Jordan, which enjoys political and economic stability as well as a central and important geographical location in the region, being situated at a junction linking Europe with the Gulf states and serving as a gateway for the whole area.

Mr. Abu Hassan said that by establishing this industrial



city the ACI was responding to a Royal desire for establishing a nucleus of a major industrial city in the Mafrag governorate.

According to Mr. Abu Hassan, the project, set up on 500 dunums of land, comprises a plant for producing sulphochemical primary products needed for the manufacture of detergents and cosmetics.

Expressing belief that the plant would be the largest of its kind in the area, Mr. Abu Hassan said that annual production would be at the rate of 26,000 tonnes of sulphochemical substances.

The plant which started production on July 7 has created jobs for 200 engineers, technicians and workers; it is using most up-to-date equipment on par with industrialised nations.

The plant is thus competing with industrial countries

in terms of production and quality control while giving due attention to the protection of the environment.

Referring to the United Company for manufacturing detergents which started production by the beginning of December, Mr. Abu Hassan said it was a subsidiary of the ACI.

This company which has been set up to complement the United Company for sulphochemicals employs the most up-to-date machinery and is keen on quality control and the protection of the environment.

With this development, the ACI in Russeifa and in Mafrag is now holder of the largest production capacity, not in Jordan alone but also in the Arab region, according to Mr. Abu Hassan.

He said that there is a tendency among world firms which produce detergents, to



consider Jordan as a major industrial zone for the production of detergents and cosmetics to be marketed in the countries of the region in view of the high-level quality of the products which, he said, are now competing with similar products manufactured by major industrial nations and because of the employment of most modern machinery and the presence of highly skilled manpower.

Mr. Abu Hassan noted that companies worldwide have expressed interest in manufacturing their own products in Jordan not to be marketed here only but also in the countries of the Middle East region because these firms believe that Jordan serves as a production centre for world markets.

"We take pride in this project and we thank God for being able to set up this industrial edifice," said Mr. Abu Hassan, adding that when King Hussein inaugurated the ACI Company in the town of Russeifa on June 4, 1963 he named the project "The King Hussein Industrial City."

Mr. Abu Hassan, expressing hope that in Mafrag projects would soon be transformed into a full-fledged industrial city, noted that his company had earlier assumed the management of the industrial complex at Russeifa which was set up and supervised by earlier pioneers.

The ACI chairman said that his company's current board is honouring the trust and shouldering the responsibility for continuity on the same path of development.

Bhutto outlines economic package

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has laid out an economic programme that could prove critical to Pakistan's efforts to secure a loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The international financiers are holding off on signing off on the \$1.3 billion package until February, wanting first to see proof of Pakistan's commitment to economic reform,

said Harry Snoek, an IMF representative.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in its annual report on Pakistan's economy released Saturday, noted that the nation's once healthy growth rate was running at 4.5 per cent in 1993.

Ms. Bhutto's programme intends to boost the rate to 7.5 per cent, largely through the nation's cotton and textile industries. Cotton is Pakistan's biggest export commodity but much of the crop has been

devastated the last two years by floods and viruses, the report said.

Ms. Bhutto also hoped to reduce inflation from 15 per cent to eight per cent and build the foreign exchange reserves to \$1.3 billion from the current \$840 million.

The bank report says Ms. Bhutto faces a 7.9 per cent deficit, slightly higher than an earlier projection of 7.3 per cent.

Bolivia gets \$1b in aid for '94

WASHINGTON (R) — The world financial community Saturday pledged \$1 billion in aid to Bolivia, one of the western hemisphere's poorest countries, as it struggles to wean its farmers off the raw material used to produce cocaine.

The group of 22 donor nations and international agencies made the pledge after a three-day meeting at the headquarters of the World Bank, the global lending organisation.

The money is aimed at helping President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada carry forward an ambitious privatisation and economic restructuring programme which puts more emphasis on social needs than similar plans elsewhere in Latin America.

"This exceeds all our expectations," Finance Minister Fernando Illanes told a news conference. He said an extra \$60 million was expected from donors absent from the meeting.

The group's chairman,

Yoshiaki Abe, praised Mr. Sanchez de Lozada for the economic restructuring plan and urged donors to come up with even more funds next year.

"If the government is successful in achieving its ambitious goals over the next year, I would urge all of you to be prepared to increase your support," he said in closing remarks to the meeting sponsored by the World Bank.

Last Wednesday Mr. Illanes told reporters Bolivia would be seeking some \$1.5 billion in assistance for the period 1994-97. The group decided to concentrate instead on aid for 1994, but came up with a sum well beyond Bolivia's goal.

Part of the money will be devoted to coca crop substitution.

Bolivia has always been one of the top producers of coca, the raw material for cocaine. But Washington now says the intensified anti-drug drive in Colombia has turned Bolivia into the world's No. 2 producer of pure cocaine, most of which finds its way to America's inner

city streets.

Mr. Illanes did not say how much would be devoted to fight drugs and indicated that will have to wait for the results of a United Nations study on crop substitution.

The assistance will prop up Mr. Sanchez de Lozada's plan to invest nearly \$7 billion for development over the next four years. The plan seeks to improve services, fight poverty, and spur economic growth of seven to eight per cent a year.

With a gross domestic product of only \$886 per capita, Bolivia is one of the western hemisphere's poorest nations.

Mr. Illanes said most of the money was pledged by the United States, Canada, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Andean Development Corporation.

Japan and Spain took part in the meeting but have not made pledges yet. Other participants included the European Community and the International Monetary Fund.

Iranian official calls for economic belt-tightening

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iranians should "tighten their belts" to counter the country's increasing economic ills caused mainly by the fall in oil prices, speaker of the Iranian parliament Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri has said.

Mr. Nategh Nuri, quoted by newspapers here Sunday, told a public meeting that Iran was the victim of a conspiracy to lower oil prices battered by world powers, notably the United States.

"To avoid a crisis, we ought to move slowly and tighten our belts," he said, without elaborating.

Iran has been selling a barrel of crude for just over \$12 recently, far below the \$17 per barrel anticipated in the country's 1993-1994 budget, according to energy experts.

Oil accounts for 90 per cent of Iran's hard currency earnings.

The fall in oil prices comes amid a cash crisis in Iran and a

debt of some \$30 billion to foreign banks.

Iran also faces payment arrears of \$10 billion, only part of which has been rescheduled.

The national currency, the rial, has virtually collapsed during the past weeks against major currencies, causing a slow down in economic activities and a sharp rise in prices.

The economic difficulties in the past year have unleashed a wave of criticism of the government's policies in the press and parliament.

Critics have called on parliament to assess the government's economic performance during the first five-year development plan (1988-1993) before giving it the go-ahead to implement the second.

Mr. Nategh Nuri said implementation of the second five-year plan could be delayed for one year to provide time to review the government's performance during the past five

years, according to newspapers here.

Last month, the daily Kayhan International blamed mismanagement, among other things, for the "state of chaos" in the Iranian economy.

"One thing is for sure, the situation will worsen and make life intolerable and miserable for this nation of 60 million people," the English-language daily said.

Meanwhile, the National Iranian Oil Co (NIOC) began selling crude oil out of Greece to improve marketing flexibility, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) has said.

It said the government oil firm was able to do this as a result of a storage arrangement with motor oil Hellas, adding that NIOC wanted to be more flexible in the Mediterranean and northwest Europe.

The newsletter said NIOC has also acquired storage space in Rotterdam, Le Havre and Sweden.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY DECEMBER 13, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: The New Moon in Sagittarius conjuncts the Sun sharing with us GEMINIS METEOR SHOW-ER creating more harmony, vitality and peaceful determination and a definite inclination toward instinctual activity.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You are restless, want a change and to be off to new surroundings and personalities but maintain steadfastness and watch what is occurring about you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You feel an outside companion is trying to hold you down to a course of action that you do not like but tactfully steer clear of the situation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You feel an outside companion is trying to hold you down to a course of action that you do not like but tactfully steer clear of the situation.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You would be wise to have a definite plan of action for whatever tasks you have to do today and then carry through without upsetting the apple cart.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Now you eager to have a good time but it would not be satisfactory so postpone seeking friends and close companions to go along on such with you.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) There is a definite conflict between worldly interests and those associate with your

own residence so plan you time so both get rightly done.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A day that can be fraught with accidents that could last for some time if you take chances in motion and watch out for recklessness on the part of other persons.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You want to start the week making changes or commitments where money or property matters are involved but judgment is not good at this time.

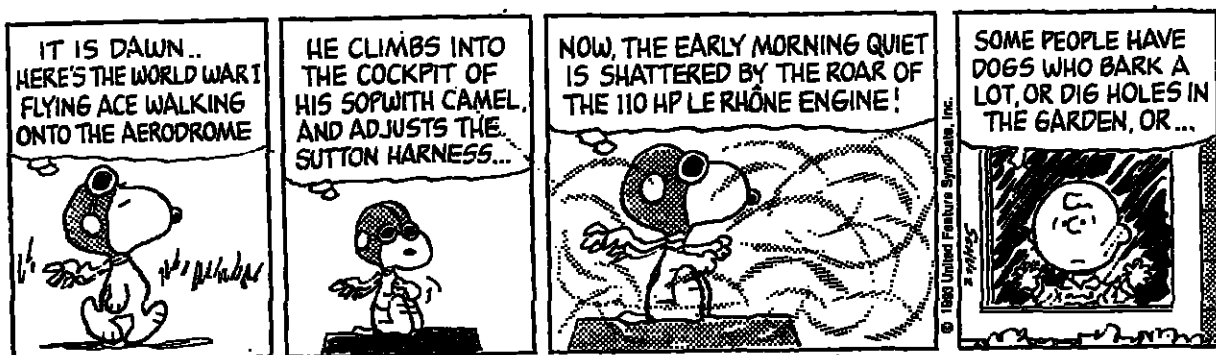
SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your own discontent today and tonight can cause you to make some sudden moves that can bring adverse conditions into effect so remain poised.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You open the week with a problem in an activity which seems very difficult to solve but take it under advisement for a day or so, then answer.

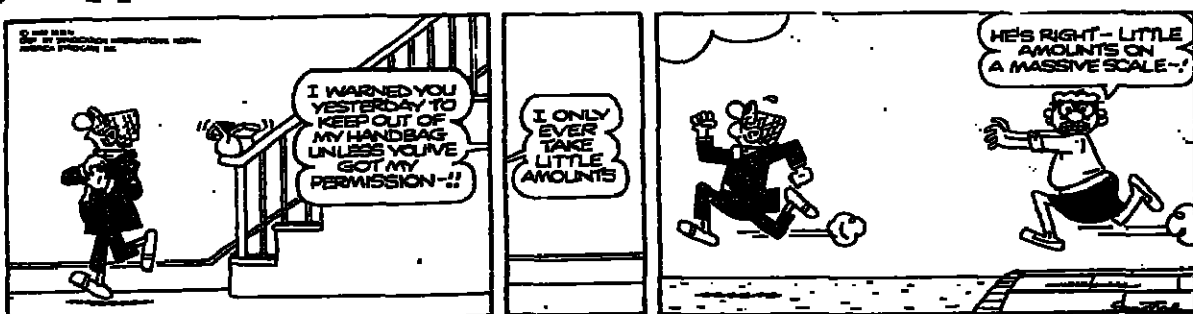
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Disagreements between close companions and friends should not be concerned with you so don't get involved in it, even though it may be difficult.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Stick to what you have agreed to do with your family despite some outside wishes or temptations that could have you on the run, spoil family accord.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



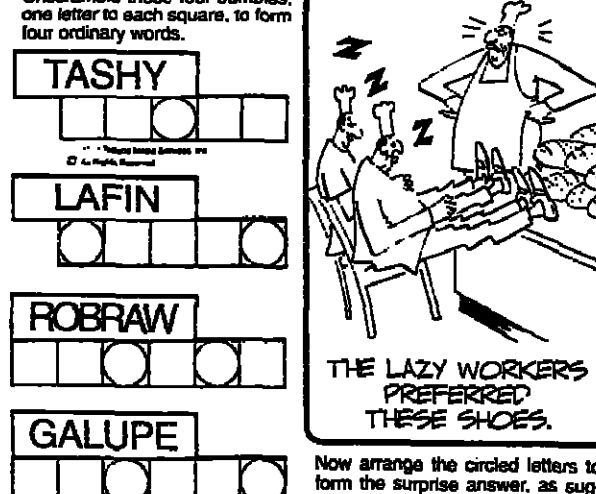
THE BETTER HALF.

By Harris



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

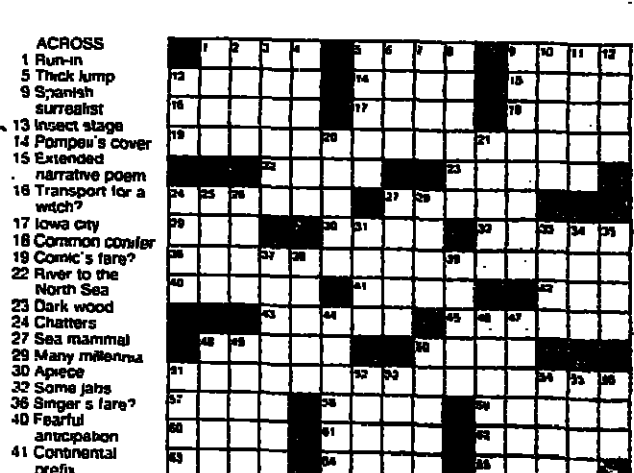
Print answer here: "O O O O - O O O O"

Yesterday's Jumbles: KNAVE GULCH SPRUCE DILUTE

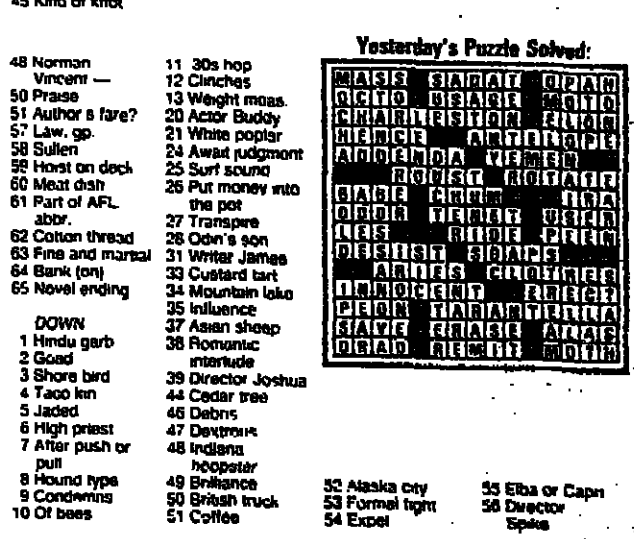
Answer: When you sneak food, eating becomes "CH-EATING"

THE Daily Crossword

by Richard Thomas



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Bosnian Serbs have made 'maximum acceptable' concessions — Karadzic

BELGRADE (Agencies) — Radovan Karadzic, leader of Bosnia's breakaway Serbs, said Sunday the Muslim-dominated government could expect no more territorial concessions from his side, Tanjug News Agency reported.

Speaking on local radio Mr. Karadzic said "the European Union should put pressure on the Croat and Muslim parties because the Serbs have given the maximum (number of concessions) acceptable," the Belgrade-based agency said.

Under a plan to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into three separate ethnically-based mini-states, the Serbs would retain 52 per cent of territory to 30 per cent for the Bosnian government and 18 per cent for Bosnian Croats.

But Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic is pushing for at least another three to four per cent of territory, mainly in Serb-held parts of eastern Bosnia, before agreeing a peace deal.

Mr. Karadzic's comments came ahead of a Dec. 21 peace talks meeting in Geneva be-

tween the three warring parties to the Bosnia conflict.

The Serb leader said the Muslim side was prepared to split the capital Sarajevo with the Serbs and forego a proposed period under U.N. protection. However, there was no immediate reaction to his claim from the Bosnian authorities.

Artillery rounds and sniper fire echoed through the Bosnian capital Sarajevo during Saturday night.

Muslim-controlled Bosnian Radio said Sunday morning several people were wounded in the shooting but it gave no precise casualty toll.

Besieging Serbs had pounded the capital with artillery, tank and mortar fire Saturday.

Mr. Karadzic said the Muslims were launching a "major offensive" against Serb-held parts of Sarajevo, the Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) said.

U.N. special human rights envoy Tadeusz Mazowiecki, on a brief visit to central Bosnia, urged the international community to lift an arms embargo against former

Yugoslavia to allow the Muslim-led Bosnian government to defend itself.

Mr. Mazowiecki was due to meet Croat Foreign Minister Mate Granic.

Meanwhile U.S. Vice President Al Gore visited American troops involved in relief efforts in Bosnia Saturday and told them their efforts were serving "a good and noble cause."

Standing beside a C-130 U.S. Air Force cargo plane at Rhein-Main Air Base, Mr. Gore told members of the 435th Airlift Wing "our country owes you a great debt of gratitude."

Washington said last month it was allocating an additional \$150 million to Bosnia relief efforts in order to double the amount of supplies being sent there during the harsh winter.

The U.S.-led airdrops began in February after President Bill Clinton failed to persuade European allies to support tougher allied action to end the fighting in the ex-Yugoslav republic.

Mr. Gore left Washington

earlier in the day for the start of an eight-day trip designed to show strong U.S. backing for economic reforms in Russia and other former Soviet republics.

In a separate development, rebel Serbs who have seized a third of Croatia voted Sunday in elections that their leaders say will help the self-proclaimed republic gain international acceptance.

The Republic of Serb Krajina (RSK) was choosing a president and parliament who will seek peace with Croatian authorities and unification with Serbs in Bosnia and the Serbian Republic.

Early voting in Katin, the RSK's fortress capital in the volcanic mountains of southern Croatia, was brisk despite an apathetic election campaign overshadowed by the collapse of living standards.

"We are going to solve our national question," said 59-year-old pensioner Ljilja Ardic as she cast her ballot. "We will say to the world that we cannot live with the Croats nor they with us."

IRA kills 2 N. Ireland policemen

BELFAST (R) — The IRA said it was responsible for the killing of two policemen in an ambush in a Northern Ireland town early Sunday.

The policemen were in a patrol vehicle when it came under attack at a road junction in Fivemiletown in the south-west of the British ruled province.

The IRA (Irish Republican Army) said in a statement to a local journalist that it carried out the ambush. Police said at least two gunmen were involved.

It brings to 82 the number of people killed in political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland this year.

The IRA has been waging a guerrilla war to oust Britain from Northern Ireland and Protestant extremists, anxious to keep the province British, have carried out their own campaign of violence.

Britain and Ireland stepped up efforts recently to end the bloodshed, but hopes for an early fell after talks between British Prime Minister John Major and Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds in Brussels Saturday.

"I cannot yet be certain that this present exercise will reach a successful conclusion," said Mr. Major.

Mr. Reynolds, who had expressed hopes of peace by Christmas, said after the talks it would be better to await a real breakthrough than rush into a watered-down agreement.

The leaders plan to keep up the talks and may meet in London next week.

Northern Ireland's Protestant majority wants the province to stay British but many Catholics want to unite with the Irish Republic. More than 3,000 people have been killed since the late 1960s in the conflict.

Britain's Mail On Sunday newspaper said the Irish government had held months of secret talks with Protestant gunmen in Northern Ireland despite official denials.

London and Dublin declined to comment on the report which, if true, could prove highly embarrassing to the Irish who last month criticised Britain for similar secret contacts with the IRA.

But even if confirmed, it may do no harm to the peace talks.

Mr. Major's embarrassment at the revelation of Britain's secret talks, which he had denied, faded after most parliamentarians seemed to approve of the contacts.

The Mail On Sunday said Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring sent officials to meet members of the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force, a ruthless guerrilla group determined to keep Northern Ireland British.

Mr. Major, who has relied on Protestant politicians to boost his slim majority in parliament, and Mr. Reynolds, who must deliver an accord acceptable to Irish nationalists, are trying to find a formula that will persuade the IRA and their Protestant foes it is worth laying down arms.

They were given one boost when Protestant extremists said it was time "the shameful point-scoring of the past" was left behind. Taken at face value, this could mean an end to horrific "tit-for-tat" violence that in October alone took 27 lives.

Patten shrugs off China's threats

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten defended Sunday his moves towards democracy for Hong Kong and shrugged off a renewed Chinese threat to take back the British colony ahead of its 1997 handover.

The governor was defending his decision to gazette here last Friday a partial reform package for local elections in 1994 and 1995. The move followed the breakdown of Sino-British talks, begun in April, after 17 fruitless rounds.

"We've made it absolutely plain that we need this partial legislation in order to give ourselves more time" to discuss more "controversial issues" like the Election Committee, functional constituencies and the "through train," which comprises arrangements to ensure that officials elected to posts in 1994-1995 will be able to serve their full terms after the turnover, Mr. Patten said after opening a new park in the colony.

"We want to go on negotiating at the table. We are not going to leave the table. Talking is...better than walking."

"We have here in Hong Kong a stable, prosperous, incredibly successful community, recognised as such by the whole of the world (and) I think by our neighbours in China," Mr. Patten said.

"And we are going to continue to be stable and prosperous, flourishing under the rule of law," he added.

The governor said he had no intention of abandoning talks with China and had gazetted his proposals to start the ball rolling on reform.

The Legislative Council, Hong Kong's mini-parliament, is scheduled Wednesday to consider the proposals, which include lowering the minimum voting age to 18 and enshrining the principle of British-style, single-seat constituencies.

On Saturday Chinese leaders, angered by Mr. Patten's decision to table the legislation without Beijing's blessing, repeated threats made by senior leader Deng Xiaoping in 1982 to take back Hong Kong before 1997 if unspecified disorder broke out in the colony.

However, on Sunday Mr. Patten attempted to allay fears that he would let Hong Kong fall into chaos.

"I noted what Chinese officials said yesterday about turmoil and chaos and I want to make an obvious point—there is no turmoil and chaos in Hong Kong," he told journalists here.

"I think that Chinese leaders and Chinese officials could put their hearts and minds at rest on that particular question."

The warning from the Chinese side came at the end

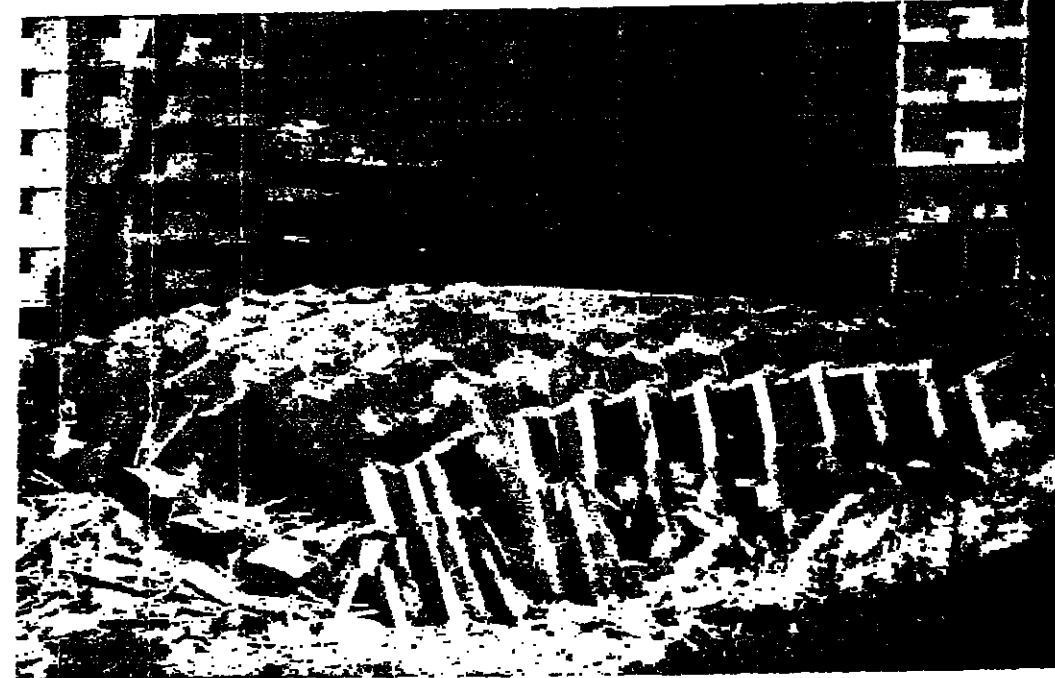
of a meeting in Beijing of the 57-member Preparatory Work Committee (PWC), a group seen by many as a potential "shadow government" to British rule.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, who is also PWC chairman, said it was an example of Britain's efforts to create "man-made turmoil" in the colony before its reversion to Chinese sovereignty.

"We must be on the alert against this," said Mr. Qian. "Obviously we hope to control disorder through cooperation and cut down possible trouble to a minimum. But if cooperation breaks down, we cannot sit back and watch disorder in Hong Kong."

Therefore, he said, the committee should intensify efforts to make its own preparations to ensure a smooth transfer under the "one country, two systems" principle, and in particular begin discussing concrete plans for forming a new legislature in 1997.

The PWC, in a communique released after the meeting, endorsed Mr. Deng's recently published 11-year-old comments which included the warning that China may be forced to take Hong Kong back before the agreed date of July 1, 1997 if turmoil broke out during the transition period.



The aftermath of the apartment block which collapsed on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (AFP photo)

Hopes of finding survivors fade in Malaysia building collapse

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Hopes of finding more survivors from the debris of a collapsed luxury apartment block faded Sunday as rescue workers failed to detect signs of life from more than 50 people feared buried.

"We have heard no sound totally, despite using some sensitive equipment," Haniff Omar, police inspector-general in charge of the rescue operation, told reporters at the site of the 12-storey block, which toppled over after being hit by a landslide.

Housing and Local Government Minister Ting Chew Peh said at least 54 people, most of them women and children, are now thought to be trapped.

Giving the latest report on those missing, Mr. Ting said the total included nine foreigners — three Filipinos, two Koreans, two Indonesians and two Indians.

Among the Malaysians feared trapped were 15 children and 21 women, he said. Rescuers have found no survivors or bodies since three people were rescued hours after the building, Kuala Lumpur's first luxury condominium when it was built in 1979, fell over early Saturday afternoon.

One of the three, a 50-year-old Japanese woman, died in hospital later.

A second apartment building in the condominium complex has begun to list, and an opening in the Earth behind the collapsed building was widening. Officials fear the tower is in danger of falling across the collapsed building.

The entire neighbourhood has been evacuated.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad visited the site Sunday for the second day running. "I wouldn't say there was no possibility at all," Mr.

Mahathir said when asked about chances of more survivors. "But it is a very thin hope to get anybody out alive there."

An Indonesian woman, who was taken to hospital with her baby Saturday, told reporters Sunday that she was trapped for about an hour before firemen spotted her.

Umimah Rashidah Kharuman, 22, who worked as a maid in the building, said she attracted the attention of firemen by pushing up a stick through the debris to indicate her position.

"We tried to escape but the building shook hard and the floor started cracking," Umimah said. "When I regained consciousness, I found myself in the rubble."

Umimah said she used her body to shield her daughter from the falling debris. She breast-fed her crying daughter until she dozed off.

Recession, reforms close in on Hosokawa

TOKYO (R) — Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa faces his toughest week since taking office, with crucial decisions on rice imports, recession management and political reform amid growing talk of a snap election.

"The first three days of this week will decide the fate of the government," political commentator Masayuki Fukuoka said Sunday. "There is strong talk of dissolution and general elections."

With the "three Rs" — rice, recession and reforms — becoming ever more entangled in parliament and stubborn resistance coming from the country's two biggest parties, Mr. Hosokawa now has little room to manoeuvre, said Mr. Fukuoka, a professor of politics at Hakuhō University.

The situation drew a rare outburst from the usually cool prime minister, noted for his trendy suits and Armani ties. "What are you doing? When exactly is the deadline?" a red-faced Hosokawa shouted at Foreign Ministry officials during a discussion of a proposed rice-import deal at a cabinet meeting Saturday, the Tokyo Shimbun said.

On Monday Mr. Hosokawa is expected to announce Japan's final acceptance of a GATT proposal to allow limited rice imports over five years in exchange for postponing a plan to replace the country's blanket ban on imports with tariffs.

The Socialist Party, the biggest in Mr. Hosokawa's fragile coalition, have twice forced him to delay the announcement.

Refusing to temper their opposition to the GATT plan, the Socialists have issued veiled threats that they will quit the coalition if Mr. Hosokawa does not reject the GATT plan.

GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) has set Wednesday as the deadline for conclusion of the seven-year-old Uruguay round of global trade talks.

Japan's refusal to lift its ban on commercial rice imports has been a major roadblock to a successful conclusion, along with a European Community-U.S. row over farm subsidies.

While the rice row could bring down the Hosokawa government, the political crisis appears to have come too late to derail Japan's acceptance of partial market opening.

Political analysts said Mr. Hosokawa has no choice but to sign the GATT compromise.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Portugal's PSD set to lose local poll

LISBON (R) — Fog cast a pall over early voting Sunday in local council elections in which Portugal's ruling centre-right Social Democrat Party (PSD) seemed headed for a humiliating defeat at the hands of the left. Opinion polls during a hard-fought 11-day campaign suggested that left-wing groups would retain power in Lisbon and Oporto and that the largest opposition movement, the Socialist Party (PS), would win the greatest number of votes overall. The PSD, which has ruled nationally in Portugal since 1984, slightly increased its majority to just over 50 per cent of the vote in the last general election in 1991. But the Socialist and Communist opposition traditionally does better in local elections and the popularity of Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva has suffered as a result of an economic slowdown that has increased unemployment. Sunday's voting was widely seen as a trial run for a general election due no later than 1995.

Malawi opposition calls off strike

BLANTYRE (AFP) — Malawi's opposition, conceding to a court injunction, Sunday called off a three-day general strike planned to begin Monday and designed to force President Kamuzu Banda's government to accept its tough conditions on the powers of an acting president. Fred Nseula, current chairman of the opposition-dominated National Consultative Council (NCC), which is overseeing the transition to democracy, told AFP that four of the five opposition parties had asked him to call off the strike "just to show the government that unlike them, we do respect court orders." He said the opposition had also taken into consideration the country's fragile security situation. "We don't want to derail the democratisation process," he said. Malawi's High Court Saturday made an order preventing the opposition from declaring the strike and from encouraging or directing any person to strike.

India clamps curfew on Kashmir town

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Indian security forces enforced a curfew Sunday on the south Kashmir town of Anantnag after fierce gun battles with Muslim militants, police said here. Paramilitary troop reinforcements and fire-fighters were also sent to Anantnag, which was sealed off after the clashes during which parts of the town were set on fire. The number of casualties in the day-long gun battles which ended late Saturday was not known. Anantnag is 50 kilometres from Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital and hub of Muslim militants fighting for an end to Indian rule over the region. The clashes marked a shift in violence from the usually volatile north Kashmir to the south. Fierce firefights in the northern town of Sopore on Nov. 29 left 15 people dead and 100 shops and houses gutted. Meanwhile, 150 Muslim rebels joined in the Kashmir winter capital of Jammu began an open-ended hunger strike Saturday to protest at India-Pakistan talks on Kashmir set for Jan. 1-3.

U.N. panel approves rights commissioner

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A U.N. panel approved the creation of a new commissioner for human rights, a post under discussion for the past 45 years, to respond quickly to major rights crises around the world. President Bill Clinton's administration has made the commissioner a cornerstone of its U.N. policy and a U.S. official said he was satisfied with the results, saying "it does what we want." A working group reached agreement in weekend marathon negotiations on a compromise resolution between Third World nations opposed to the position and those lobbying for it, including industrial states, numerous Latin American countries and some African nations. A General Assembly committee is scheduled to approve the post later this week after which it goes to the full Assembly before the end of the year.

Belarus split over Russian election

MINSK (R) — The former Soviet Republic of Belarus, its leadership split into liberal and conservative camps, is equally divided on who it would like to see emerge as a winner in Sunday's Russian parliamentary elections. All political forces in the country of 10 million acknowledge that Russia's vast influence on its western neighbour means the outcome of the vote has a great bearing on its future economic and political development. Unlike neighbouring Ukraine, where all political forces back reformers and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Belarus' inbuilt conservatism has created a groundswell of opposition to fast-track reforms in the Kremlin.

Vast majority of Americans favour gun registration

NEW YORK (R) — Americans strongly favour mandatory gun registration but also oppose a ban on handguns, according to a poll released Saturday by Time magazine. A nationwide Time/CNN poll found that 78 per cent favour mandatory registration of all guns while 74 per cent oppose a handgun ban. Time said. The Yankelovich Partners survey of 500 adults was conducted on Dec. 3 before a man went on a shooting spree aboard a New York commuter train, killing five and wounding 18 with a semi-automatic gun. Forty-eight per cent of those polled said they had a gun or guns in their home. But of these individuals, six in 10 said the gun was for sport while just two in 10 said it was for protection from crime. The remainder said the weapon was for another reason or for a combination of reasons. The survey was conducted after congressional approval of the Brady Bill imposing a five-day waiting period on handgun purchases — a step bitterly opposed by the gun lobby.

Taiwan plans tough child prostitution law

TAIPEI (R) — Clients of Taiwanese child prostitutes could be jailed under a tough draft law aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation, the Central Daily News said Sunday. Under the bill drafted by the Justice Ministry, people caught consorting with child prostitutes would face jail sentences of up to five years, the newspaper said. Traders in child prostitutes and parents who sold their children into prostitution would face even harsher but unspecified sentences, according to the bill. Conventional police crackdowns on vice had failed to solve the problem of some 40,000 to 60,000 prostitutes under the age of 18 in Taiwan. At present police, citing inadequate laws, often release clients of prostitutes without punishment after detaining them briefly or fining them. Local media reports have said some police officers are protecting and even running brothels. Last month more than 10,000 Taiwanese, including the interior, justice and finance ministers, jogged past a row of shuttered brothels in Taipei's notorious red-light district to protest against the island's child prostitution industry. The Garden of Hope Foundation, a charity group fighting child prostitution, has proposed publishing the names and addresses and photographs of child prostitutes in new papers.

Crying is over as Evita heads for big screen

LOS ANGELES (R) — Don't cry for Evita any longer, says film director Oliver Stone. Stone is teaming up with Disney to produce the long-delayed movie version of the stage musical about Argentina's notorious former first lady, Stone, the Oscar-winning director of such controversial movies as JFK, Platoon, and Born On The Fourth Of July, said in an interview he has already begun the search for an actress for the title role. "It could take up to a year," he said. "We are looking at known as well as unknown actresses." In 13 years of on-again, off-again efforts to bring the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice musical to the big screen, consideration has been given to stars including Madonna, Meryl Streep, Barbara Streisand, Bette Midler, Gloria Estefan and Maria Carey. No one has yet been named to play Evita's husband, the late Argentine dictator Juan Peron, although British actor Jeremy Irons has once been rumored as a possibility. Stone first expressed interest in Evita five years ago before Disney acquired rights to the project but the deal fell through. "I wrote the script, developed it, travelled everywhere... (but) couldn't make it at that time," he said. Disney came close to making Evita three years ago with Glenn Gordon Caron directing and Madonna starring, but it aborted production when the project went over budget. "Disney came back to me recently and offered me conditions that were better than ever with more money for it and I got the part," Stone said. The movie, which popularised such songs as Don't Cry For Me, Argentina, is budgeted at \$40 million with production set to begin in the next 18 months, the Los Angeles Times reported. Stone is not expected to turn his attention to Evita until after he completes his next movie, Noriega, about the deposed Panamanian military leader. His newest film Heaven And Earth, opens on Christmas Day.

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HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN

Sao Paulo grab chances to beat Milan

TOKYO (R) — Brazil's Sao Paulo won club soccer's Intercontinental Cup for the second successive year Sunday, beating AC Milan of Italy 3-2 in a scrappy game at Japan's National Stadium.

Though Milan dominated much of the play, the Brazilians made the best of their opportunities in a match that French referee Joel Quiniou stopped frequently for minor infractions.

"Milan played with good rhythm, but we came out better in the result," 38-year-old man of the match Toninho Cerezo told a news conference afterwards.

Sao Paulo finished the first half from a Palhinha goal after 19 minutes, when he connected with a low cross and put the ball away from the edge of the six-yard box.

It was the Brazilians' only real opportunity of the half, and they spent much of the time frustrating the Italian attackers with tight marking at the back.

They had some luck too, when Daniele Massaro fired a thundering volley against the bar from outside the penalty area, and again when goalkeeper Zetti scrambled to save a Jean-Pierre Papin header with his left foot.

Milan seemed to find their form in the second half and appeared set for a comeback when Massaro volleyed home from close range in the opening minutes.

But Sao Paulo took the lead again after 59 minutes, when Toninho Cerezo converted his team's second scoring chance into its second goal with another close-range strike.

When French ace Papin headed an equaliser in the 81st minute, the game appeared headed for extra time, but Sao Paulo clinched the match with just four minutes to go.

Muller charged the penalty area off a quick break, pursued by a Milan defender. When goalkeeper Sebastiao Rossi came out too early and fumbled the clearance, the fat-faced forward nipped past for the winner.

Sao Paulo's veteran manager Tele Santana admitted his team had had the best of the luck.

"After Milan equalised, we expected to go into extra time," he said.

"We were lucky to score that goal," he said of Muller's winner. "It was partly a mistake by the Milan defence — the goalkeeper came out too quickly."

Santana came to Japan this year widely tipped for the job of head coach of Japan's national team, but the talks appear to have fallen through because of the amount of money he was demanding.

AC Milan's manager Fabio Capello took the defeat hard.



Cardamone retains boxing title

BERCK, France (R) — Italy's Agostino Cardamone outpointed French challenger Frederic Scillier Saturday to retain his European middleweight title and an unbeaten record. The 28-year-old Cardamone was given a unanimous verdict by the three judges after a grueling fight which left both boxers with barely the strength to trade punches in the closing rounds. Two judges awarded the bout 117-114 in the Italian's favour and the third gave him the verdict by

115-113. Cardamone, who took the European title in June, has won all 20 of his professional bouts, with seven inside the distance. "He was strong throughout the fight," the 29-year-old sculler said. "I was feeling very tight," the 29-year-old sculler said. "I was feeling very weak at the end." The photograph shows Cardamone (right) in action against Scillier (left) in the closing rounds of the fight.

Motivation beats off foreign raiders

HONG KONG (AFP) — Motivation, starting at 11-1, completed the double for local horses with a resounding victory in the Hong Kong International Cup at the Sha Tin Racecourse here Sunday.

Under light rain, the Argentine-bred horse was perfectly ridden by Australian jockey John Marshall.

With a middling early speed, Marshall took the initiative and raced outside the early leader, the French entry Marlo.

"They weren't going very hard and it gave me the chance to sit outside the leader. It seems a long straight when you're trying to hold on but the horse certainly gave a lot," said Marshall.

The favourite River Verdon (9-2) ran on strongly from well back in the field to finish fourth just behind Stark South who finished hard over the last 100 metres.

The heavily backed Kiwi Goller (10-1 into 6-1) raced in third place to the corner but failed to quicken.

The strongly fancied Verne (6-1) was gallant in defeat and battled on strongly after looking in with a big chance at the 200m.

Earlier in the day the Neivle Beggs-trained Winning Partners (5-2) brought a smile to favourite backers with a gutsy win in the Hong Kong International Bowl.

Superbly ridden by Mick Kinane, the local hero caught the gallant British filly Marina Park close to home to win by a neck.

Marina Park had raced on the fence behind the Japanese entrant Tomoe Regent to the corner before dashing to the lead under jockey Frankie Dettori.

She dashed clear but was unable to understand the challenge from Winning Partners.

Super-G Olympic gold medalist Compagnoni showed her frustration by slamming her ski stick against the piste after recovering from her fall and was reported to have left immediately from Veysonnaz.

Switzerland's Vreni Schneider, who won this season's only other slalom at Santa Caterina in November, was the first on the piste and the first to fall, causing moans of sympathy from her home supporters.

The Swiss received some comfort by Von Gruening's third position. "I have a lot of experience but I train hard to try to do well here."

"It was not very easy for me but I love the hard snow which helped me," said Von Gruening, who at 29 is one of the oldest competitors in the women's alpine skiing pack.

With an overnight snowfall and bright, sunny weather, conditions were better than for Saturday's giant slalom, though organisers said the piste was still very hard.

Schneider, who has 44 giant slalom and slalom victories to her credit, was hoping to garner more points after coming third in Saturday's giant slalom race in the hope of edging ahead of World Cup standings leader Anita Wachter of Austria.

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Al Faisali widens lead to 3 point at top of Jordan soccer standings

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Monday's match in the 10th week of soccer's first division championship might well affect the top four teams eyeing the precious title. Former titleholders Al Wihdat clash against Al Hussein; second-placed Al Ahli face Al Arabi; and Al Jazireh, now in sixth place, meet Al Yarmouk.

During past week, titleholders Al Faisali held on to their top rankings after a 4-0 win over Al Yarmouk. Striker Jiryes Tadros broke the season's record for fastest goal when he gave his team the lead in the first minute.

The goal stunned Al Yarmouk who could not effectively attack their opponents goal as Subhi Suleiman netted in the second goal in the 29th minute.

Al Faisali, scored their two other goals by Jafar Hamad and Firas Khalaileh in the 63rd and 67th minutes as Al Yarmouk finished the week in last place.

Third-placed Al Hussein could not advance their standing after they were held to a 1-1 draw with lowly Sahab.

Sahab's Mohammad Odeh gave his team the lead in the 29th minute, but Al Hussein's Aref Hussein managed to equalise and saved his team from an unexpected loss when

he scored in the 56th minute. Meanwhile, Al Jazireh scored their second win with a stunning 4-0 win over Al Baqaa.

They scored two goals in the 14th and 26th minutes to end the first half 2-0, while Al Baqaa lost a one definite scoring chance.

Al Jazireh, playing with obvious confidence and determined to advance their standing, relentlessly attacked their opponent's goal and netted in another two in the 47th and 84th minutes.

Al Fubeis captured seventh place this week after a 2-1 win over Al Arabi who fell to fifth place.

Al Arabi were the first to score by Ahmad Subhi in the 28th minute. However Fubeis secured the win after two first-half goals in the 37th and 40th minutes.

Al Wihdat jumped to fourth place after a 1-1 draw with Al Ahli.

Mohammad Rajab scored for Al Wihdat from a penalty shot in the 54th minute after Firas Fawzi was tackled in the box.

Al Ahli's Nart Yadaq managed to score the equaliser in the 69th minute and enabled his team to hold on to second place for now.

Al Ramtha scored the most convincing win the week when they handed Al Qadissieh their second consecutive loss.

Although Al Qadissieh led 2-0 after goals by Mustafa Adam and Ismail Awadat, Al Ramtha scored their first goal from a penalty kick by Mohammad Al Khazali in the 47th minute.

From then on Al Ramtha tightened their grip and took total control of the game as Issa Azaizeh scored the equalising goal in the 67th minute.

Striker Badran Al Shaqran scored his team's final two goals in the 73rd and 91st minutes ending the match 4-2 and moving to eighth place in the standings. Al Ramtha have five postponed matches against Al Faisali, Al Jazireh, Al Baqaa, Al Yarmouk and Sahab.

During the past week the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF), faced with ever-growing incidents of fan trouble or player bookings imposed JD 1,000 fines on Al Wihdat and Sahab clubs for the unsportsmanlike conduct to their fans. Both clubs, after appealed to the JSF and the fines were reduced to JD 500 each.

Al Ramtha and Al Hussein were also fined JD 200 for first instances of the same offence.

Al Faisali's Ahmad Shtawi and Al Baqaa's Abdul Rahman Khader were given a three-match suspension and fined JD 50 each for unlawful tackles and obscene language.

The JSF also announced results in the 1993 youth competitions: Al Wihdat clinched the titles in the under-15, under-17 and under-19 competitions. Al Arabi, Al Awdah, and Al Hussein were the runners up in the respective tournaments.

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Mader continues fine start to skiing season

VAL D'ISERE, France (R) — World Cup leader Guenther Mader continued his fine start to the season by clinching the super-giant slalom in the French resort of Val D'Isere Sunday.

Austrian Mader glided smoothly through the 47 gates of the Oreiller-Killy Pisté to claim his second victory this

winter following a giant slalom in Park City last month. "I knew I was in good shape but I didn't expect to win here," Mader said. "I like this course which is quite demanding and the conditions were ideal."

Mader made a cautious start and then moved up a gear in the mid-section to clock a final time of one minute 28.25 seconds.

Olympic champion Kjetil Andre Aamodt made a big mistake on the upper part of the course but then gave it all he had to take second place 0.17 of a second behind the winner.

Aamodt said he badly wanted a win to pay tribute to Norway's slalom and giant slalom head coach Ales Gartner, who died on Saturday of a heart attack.

"I really wanted to win for Ales and I took too many risks," he said.

Young American Tommy Moe showed he had plenty to offer by taking third place 0.36 of a second behind the winner.

"I'm delighted," said the 23-year-old from Alaska. "I think this is going to be a great season for me. People have been waiting for me for quite a while and now it's time to win races."

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Both vulnerable. South deals.
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♠ K 10 7
♥ K 9 4
♦ A 8 5
♣ K 8 3 2
EAST
♠ J 4 2
♥ A Q 8 3
♦ 6 5 3
♣ J 8
SOUTH
♠ 9 8 5
♥ A Q J 10 7 2
♦ J 3
♣ A 4
The bidding:
South: West North East
1 ♣ Pass 2 NT Pass
3 ♥ Pass 4 ♥ Pass
Pass Pass
Opening lead: Six of ♣
Some bridge players are miserly with their cards. They hate playing anything but their lowest card to a trick they can't win. On defense, that means their partners will often have to work without any help of a signal. But being overly profligate with high cards can be as costly. This hand is from Bill Root's upcoming book on defense.

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Harrison Ford — in
PATRIOT GAMES
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORD
CONCORD '1'
Clint Eastwood — in
IN THE LINE OF FIRE
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD '2'
Kim Basinger — in
Two Hot To Handle
Shows: 3:15, 6, 8:15, 10:15

PLAZA
PLAYING WITH THE VILLAINS
Arabic
Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 5, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

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Russia holds historic vote; many stay home

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russians voted Sunday to elect their first post-Soviet parliament and render a verdict on President Boris Yeltsin's constitution, but early turnout figures showed millions stayed home and snubbed the poll.

Mr. Yeltsin was among the first voters to turn up at a Moscow polling station near his apartment and cast his ballot in favour of the draft charter that would boost his powers and establish a Western-style system of government.

"I am certain that the constitution will be approved by all," Mr. Yeltsin told reporters as he had his wife Naina entered polling station number 55-56 some 20 minutes after it opened.

The Russian leader expressed confidence that voters would elect "a better parliament" than the former old-guard legislature that he dissolved 10 weeks ago in a shock decision that set off a revolt crushed by the military on October 4.

About 107 million Russians were eligible to vote in the referendum and in the poll to elect the new federal assembly comprised of a 450-seat state Duma and of a 178-member Federation Council.

Under referendum rules, at least 50 per cent of the registered electorate must take part for the plebiscite to be considered valid.

According to officials from a presidential centre analysing the results, turnout stood at about 50 per cent in the Far East when polls closed at 10:00 p.m.

local time there.

In the Far East city of Khabarovsk, the chairman of the local elections commission, Mikhail Sleptsov, appeared on television one hour before poll closure and appealed to voters to go to the polls.

The elections were: The key Russians voted for candidates to both houses of the new parliament and for a new constitution. President Yeltsin ordered the election in September after dissolving the previous parliament, which had opposed his reforms.

The parliament is called the Federal Assembly. It consists of two houses. The State Duma is the lower house, while the Federation Council is the upper house.

State Duma has 450 members, of which 225 will be elected according to party lists. The other 225 will be elected in geographical constituencies.

The Federation Council has 176 members, two from each of Russia's 88 republics and regions.

Members of parliament normally will serve four-year terms, but the first parliament elected will serve only for two years because Mr. Yeltsin says Russia is in a period of transition.

The new constitution replaces 1978 document adopted under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and amended hundreds of times in recent years by Russian lawmakers. Key provisions include: Right to private ownership of land, freedom of trade and freedom of movement, forbids cen-

sorship and strengthens powers of the president.

Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy claimed success for his party in the elections, saying that only "government falsification" would prevent his group from topping the polls.

"We will win this election. I must be the first but the government party is making... the first (Russia's Choice) and the second our party," he told Reuters.

"I am the first, but by falsification I will be the second."

Mr. Zhirinovskiy, tipped by recent opinion polls to win a big share of the vote, said victory would enable his party to carry out its election programme, halting aid to other countries and reversing plans to convert the military sector to civilian use.

"If we win this election we have an opportunity to... ameliorate the condition of life of our people and... to get peace with European countries."

Mr. Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the Russia's right-wing Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), has demanded the restoration of Russian rule throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union and draconian measures to restore public order.

He has won popular support through a highly effective television campaign, raising alarm in the reformist camp, other former Soviet republics and the West. Opinion polls say the LDPR may come second or even first of the 13 parties in the contest.

King, Crown Prince congratulate South African Nobel laureates

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday sent cables of congratulations to South African President F. W. de Klerk and African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela over the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to them.

"In offering my sincere felicitations, I should like to recall that it was largely due to your courage and foresight, that the necessary decision to dismantle the apartheid regime were taken," the King told Mr. De Klerk.

"I am delighted also to know that the transition to a more democratic regime has taken place in a relatively peaceful en-

vironment, and I should like to express the confident hope that under your wise leadership the people of South Africa would move to greater democracy and prosperity."

In his cable to Mr. Mandela, the King said: "Your receipt of this distinguished prize is a fitting tribute to your qualities of integrity and perseverance in upholding an axiomatic, yet often overlooked truth, that all men are born equal and are entitled to dignity."

"This axiomatic truth is proclaimed in the Holy Koran in the following words: 'We have bestowed dignity on the children of Adam.' We rejoice in the fact that the long years you spent in a just struggle to uphold this universal value have borne fruit in South Africa."

Crown Prince Hassan said in his cable to Mr. De Klerk:

"This fitting tribute to your efforts to move South Africa along the path of democracy is a cause of celebration for all those who cherish the concepts of pluralism and striving for fair and peaceful solutions to seemingly intractable problems."

It is also a recognition of your courage and foresight."

The Crown Prince told Mr. Mandela:

"Your long struggle and perseverance under conditions of extreme adversity bears testimony to the strength of your commitment to the lofty ideas that we also share and uphold foremost among these is the innate equality of all men and women and their inalienable right to human dignity."

Forty Palestinian guards cross bridge today in symbolic move

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Forty Palestinians trained as security and personal guards in Jordan crossed the River Jordan Monday in a symbolic event marking the beginning of the implementation of the Sept. 13 accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Apart from the early morning crossing across the King Hussein Bridge, the PLO is not planning any other event in Jordan to mark the occasion, against an almost foregone conclusion that the scheduled beginning of the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip and Jericho was going to be delayed, PLO officials said.

They said no orders had been received from the Tunis headquarters of the PLO to move units of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) trained as policemen to the Jordan Valley ahead of deployment in the areas expected to be evacuated by the Israelis in the four-month withdrawal.

The batch of 40 is the latest group of Palestinian residents of the occupied territories to receive training as security guards in Jordan, they said. The group arrived here from the West Bank several weeks ago for training at the King's facilities, they said.

Like the previous groups,

the new trainees also will be assigned to protect strategic Palestinian buildings and personalities, including some members of the Palestinian delegation to peace talks with Israel, the PLO officials said.

In the meantime, all other plans for the deployment for the larger 15,000-strong Palestinian police force remained frozen pending the outcome of Sunday's meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, they said.

Earlier plans had called for moving some 1,500 members of the Badr Brigade of the PLA trained as policemen in Jordan to the Jordan Valley along with up to 1,300 members of the Al Quds Brigade based in Iraq ready to move into Jericho.

A similar number was expected to gather in Rafah on the Egyptian border ahead of deployment in the Gaza Strip.

The Al Quds members, who have also undergone basic police training in Iraqi facilities, were to have arrived here on Dec. 5 for a two or three-day stay at Mafrak before moving to the Jordan Valley.

As things stood Sunday, the units remained in Iraq, ready to move as soon as the PLO leadership gave the green light, the officials said.

It appeared that out of a total of 2,500 PLA soldiers in

Iraq, only 1,300 opted to exercise their option to join the police force and move into the occupied territories, other sources said.

"The rest are married to Iraqi nationals and settled in Iraq," said one source. "Those among them who might have wanted to move out of Iraq appeared to have changed their mind after the recent developments at the U.N.," added the source.

The source was referring to the possibility of a lifting of the international sanctions against Iraq in the first half of 1994 after Baghdad recently agreed to long-term monitoring of its arms development programmes as part of the Gulf war ceasefire conditions.

Living conditions in Iraq are expected to improve dramatically with the lifting of the sanctions, which include a ban on Iraqi oil exports, the mainstay income of Baghdad, and this could have encouraged some of the PLA soldiers to exercise their option of settling down in Iraq rather than facing the uncertainties of autonomy in the occupied territories, the source noted.

In the meantime, PLO officials said they were awaiting Israeli permission for the families of the PLA soldiers to enter the occupied territories. All relevant details have been given to the Israeli authorities, they said.

Assad, Hrawi discuss coordination

DAMASCUS (Agencies) —

Lebanese President Elias Hrawi met his Syrian counterpart Hafez al-Assad here Sunday to discuss the Middle East peace process, officials said.

Arab diplomats said the two leaders were coordinating their countries' position following U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's peace mission to the region last week.

Mr. Christopher, who did not visit Lebanon but spoke to Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri on the telephone, announced that bilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks would resume in Washington by February.

The head of the Syrian delegation, Mustafa al-Alfai, was in Cairo on Sunday to discuss plans to restart the talks, which have been stalled since September.

Egyptian sources said the visit was not connected with the meeting the same day in Cairo between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Alfai was to meet Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid, the official Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported.

The bilateral negotiations were suspended after the Israeli-PLO autonomy accord was signed on Sept. 13, amid Syrian criticism on the grounds that it weakened the joint Arab stand in negotiations with the Jewish state.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh told Reuters that Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam was present at the Assad-Hrawi meeting.

Syria, the main foreign power broker in Lebanon, backs Beirut's demands for implementation of U.N. Resolution 425 calling for Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon.

Mr. Christopher also announced that Syria had promised to help determine the fate of six Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon since the mid-1980s.

He had said Mr. Assad's pledge was an "important humanitarian gesture" in the peace talks.

Meanwhile, Israeli army officers met the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Tel Aviv on Sunday, a senior official said amid hopes of a prisoner exchange in Lebanon.

Diana would like to re-marry, says friend

LONDON (R) — A friend of

Princess Diana was quoted by a British Sunday newspaper as saying she thought she would like to re-marry and have more children. "She's a young attractive woman and I see no reason why she shouldn't marry again, although I think only a few men could cope with the pressure of the attention," he would bring," army officer Major James Hewitt told the Mirror tabloid. Maj. Hewitt, a polo-playing bachelor, said the 32-year-old princess had worked hard to save her marriage to heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles. Princess Diana declared intention to step back from public life was a sad loss for Britain, he said. "She has been a great ambassador for the country and would have made a wonderful queen."

I know that the princess tried very hard to make her marriage work. At the end of the day though it was an impossible task," Maj. Hewitt, 35, insisted that despite various rumours, he and the princess "are, and always have been, just good friends."

Princess Diana announced just over a week ago that she was quitting public life — almost a year to the day after she and Prince Charles officially separated. She blamed media intrusion for her decision and said she wanted more time and space for herself, especially with her two young sons Prince William and Prince Harry.

Major backs Diana amid doubts over accession

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister John Major and government officials have stepped in two support her to the throne Prince Charles against church-led criticism that divorce or infidelity would make him morally unfit to be king. The Sunday Express newspaper said Mr. Major had mobilised his colleagues to scotch suggestions that succession could leap-frog to Prince William, 12, because of the tarnished image of his 45-year-old father, Prince Charles. "He (Charles) will be our king. He has prepared himself for the role perhaps more conscientiously than any in the long line of his predecessors," one government minister, William Waldegrave, wrote in the Sunday Telegraph. Questions about Prince Charles' future sprung up last week after his estranged wife said she was quitting public life, in a move some royal observers saw as Prince Charles' work. Her announcement seemed a sure sign the couple were heading for divorce and Church of England leaders raised doubts about having as king a man who has declined to deny rumours of an affair with brigadier's wife Camilla Parker Bowles. "Diana's exit seemed to set a fair wind for Charles. But he did not bargain for a national debate about his moral suitability to be king," the Sunday Times commented. New polls Sunday showed roughly half of leading Anglican clergymen would oppose Prince Charles as monarch if the allegations of adultery during his 12-year marriage to Princess Diana proved true. But 71 per cent of 507 clergymen questioned by the News Of The World said divorce should not stop him succeeding his mother Queen Elizabeth when she dies, or abdicates.

Michael Jackson reportedly back in California

LOS ANGELES (R) — Pop superstar Michael Jackson, who faces accusations of child sex molestation, was reported to be back home in southern California Saturday after leaving a European retreat where he was treated for drug abuse. KCBS-TV, an affiliate of the CBS network, said Jackson landed in Santa Barbara Airport Friday aboard a chartered Boeing 727 jet, accompanied by two boys from New Jersey, aged eight and 11. Jackson was then driven to his Neverland Valley estate about 40 miles (64 km) away, the television report said. Jackson left the plane wearing a red jacket, red mask, and black pants. Jackson has been accused in a civil lawsuit of sexually molesting a 12-year-old boy over a four-month period last year. The case is scheduled to be heard in March and Jackson has denied the allegations. KCBS reported Jackson's return without attribution, saying Jackson entered America shortly after his lawyers struck a deal with prosecutors.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel axes Xmas tree gift to Bethlehem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Norway's gift of a Christmas tree to Bethlehem in recognition of the peace accord was finally chopped down by Israel on Sunday. The Norwegian embassy and Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij appealed to the Israeli authorities to waive their ban on importing pine trees as a gesture towards peace. But after a meeting Sunday, a spokesman for the agriculture ministry said: "We have not changed our decision to stop this. But there are plenty of trees here. They will have to buy one in Israel if they want a Christmas tree. There are plenty here and I can give them the address where to go. We told them that last week."

Saddam exempts artists from tax

BAGHDAD (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein has decided to exempt artists from paying income tax and given land to 400 journalists to build homes. Iraqi newspapers reported Sunday. Taxes will also be lifted on film-making. The decisions were taken at the recommendation of the Artists' Federation, which is headed by the president's son, Uday Hussein and the Writers' Union. President Saddam already granted land to 800 journalists at the start of the year.

Brisk turn-out in Turkish-Cypriot poll

NICOSIA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriots went to the polls Sunday in a parliamentary election set to determine the fate of U.N. efforts to build a federation with the Greek-Cypriots on this divided island. Officials reported a brisk turn-out and no incidents. The election in the breakaway Turkish republic of northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognised only by Ankara, aims to resolve a feud between Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş and his Prime Minister Dervish Eroglu. The two men have been at odds over a U.N. confidence-building plan to reopen Nicosia airport and the Turkish-occupied town of Famagusta, with Mr. Eroglu charging that Mr. Denktaş was ready to make concessions to the Greek-Cypriots. The polls were expected to result in a coalition between the centre-right National Union Party (NUP), headed by Mr. Eroglu, and the leftist Turkish Republic Party (TRP) of Ozker Ozgur, an advocate of territorial compromise.

Egypt group says 13 torture deaths in 1993

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian human rights group said Sunday 13 people had died from torture this year in Egyptian prisons, police stations or state security headquarters. Abdullah Khalil, board member of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR), said his group had documented 221 cases of torture in Egypt since the government ratified a U.N. convention against torture on July 26, 1986. He was addressing a news conference to launch EOHR's book "Crime Without Punishment: Torture in Egypt." EOHR said state security intelligence put pressure on several printing houses to prevent publication of the book, which documents several torture cases.

'Russians flew missile chasis to Syria'

NEW YORK (AFP) — Russian cargo planes transported a special truck chassis, which can be adapted to mount mobile missiles, from North Korea to Syria last summer, despite objections from the U.S. government, the New York Times reported on Sunday. It said two C-130 planes chartered by a private Russian company took off from Sunan airport last August for Damascus with the chassis on board. Intelligence sources said the chassis were probably taken to Nasariya, where Syria has a missile factory. The paper said Washington had asked Moscow to prevent the planes taking off because the material could strengthen Syria's military position against Israel. After Russia refused, the U.S. government hushed up the incident so as not to compromise support for Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Washington also wanted to persuade Syria to be more helpful in the Middle East peace negotiations, the paper said.

Libya vows to crush exiled Qadhafi opponents

TUNIS (R) — Libya vowed Sunday to crush exiled opponents of Colonel Muammar Qadhafi's government and appealed for the assassination of former Foreign Minister Abdul Monem Al Houmi. The decision was taken at a meeting of the "basic popular committees," in Janzour, 20 kilometres west of Tripoli, attended by Col. Qadhafi. A statement issued by the meeting and carried by the official Libyan news agency JANA expresses readiness "to crush any treachery and crush traitors and spies like the named Abdul Monem Al Houmi..." Mr. Houmi was with Col. Qadhafi one of the authors of the 1969 "revolution." He later became Libya's foreign minister before joining exiled opponents. He is reported, along with former Foreign Minister Mansour Kikhia, to have attended a Libyan opposition gathering in Algeria in October.

Arafat to seek \$1.5 b from Britain for 'Ottoman gold'

LONDON (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat will demand when he visits London this week that Britain return £1 billion (\$1.5 billion) worth of gold allegedly owed to the Palestinian people, the Sunday Times reported.

The newspaper said the gold supposedly came from the Ottoman empire and was seized in Jerusalem when Britain ruled Palestine. Britain maintains it has paid off most of its debts and owes the Palestinians less than £1 million (\$1.5 million), the newspaper said.

"The mystery of the missing gold dates from the years when Britain governed Palestine before the creation of Israel. Arafat believes the Bank of England holds gold reserves used under the British mandate to back the Palestinian pound," it said.

The PLO leader will be visiting London as a guest of the British government and will have talks with Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd on Tuesday

at the beginning of his tour.

A British Foreign Office official said that when Junior Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg saw Mr. Arafat in Tunis recently, the issue was not raised.

A Palestine trust fund and a currency board were set up after Britain withdrew from Palestine in 1948 to try to settle any outstanding claims on London.

"We are working on the basis that if Mr. Arafat wanted to raise it, we would look into it," a Foreign Office spokesman said.

Britain was "keeping an open mind" about the question, he added.

The PLO and Israel signed an agreement on Sept. 13 to introduce Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

The Sunday Times, quoting Palestinian sources, said Mr. Arafat intended to plead — "at the highest levels" — for the gold to be returned.

Mr. Arafat will meet some of the country's leading political and religious leaders.

Somalis blame each other, U.N. for failure of talks

ADDIS ABABA (Agencies) — Feuding Somali factions Sunday blamed each other and the U.N. for the failure of peace talks here.

Somalia's most powerful warlord Mohammed Farah Aided accused the United Nations of working behind the scenes to wreck efforts for peace and reconciliation in his war-torn country.

At a news conference at the end of five days of talks here, General Aided said: "The failure of the current talks was due to foreign interference."

Gen. Aided went on to accuse the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) of planning to form a new Somali government without his Somali National Alliance (SNA).

"We know that those who have refused to sign the supplementary agreement to the Addis Ababa accord (agreed last March) are being called for an urgent meeting with UN-

OSOM in Mogadishu," he said.

"We also know the plan is to form a Somali government without the participation of SNA — which is totally impossible," Gen. Aided added.

Gen. Aided said his SNA enjoys the support of "75 per cent of the Somali people." "Those who have refused to sign the current supplementary agreement to last March's Addis Ababa accord have no backing of the Somali people. It will be futile to try and work out a plan without the presence of SNA," he said.

The 12 Somali groups allied to rival warlord Ali Mahdi Mohammed said in a statement that last week's talks failed because Gen. Aided had demanded changes in the March accord.

The current talks could not conclude on a satisfactory note due to renewed demands from the SNA side designed to engage in a new revision of the

Addis Ababa agreement," it said.

The group of 12 will abide by the Addis Ababa accord in all circumstances and will also pursue dialogue with SNA to find common ground for reconciliation," it added.

In Washington, Secretary of Defence Les Aspin said the United States will withdraw about 2,500 of its 8,200 troops in Somalia by Christmas.

"Between a quarter and a third of them will be out of Somalia" by Dec. 25, Mr. Aspin said on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press."

While Mr. Aspin said the soldiers may not be back in the United States with their families in time for the Christmas and New Year's holidays, he said they will have been pulled out by Dec. 25.

He reiterated the U.S. commitment to withdraw all its troops by March 31. They were sent to Somalia a year ago as part of the United Nations

efforts to relieve a severe famine there, but since then have been drawn into civil war.

In the latest violence, Somali gunmen wounded two U.S. military policemen in Mogadishu Sunday after a Somali man was killed in a clash between clans, a U.S. military spokesman said.

He said U.S. military police (MP) sentries at Sward base in northeast Mogadishu saw inter-clan fighting break out nearby and a Somali man shot in an exchange at about noon (0900 GMT).

"The MPs went to check on the wounded and came under small arms fire which they returned," Colonel Steven Rausch said. "Two of the MPs suffered minor injuries — shrapnel wounds."

"Four or five people fired on them sporadically... when the MPs reached the Somali they saw go down, he was dead," he said.

